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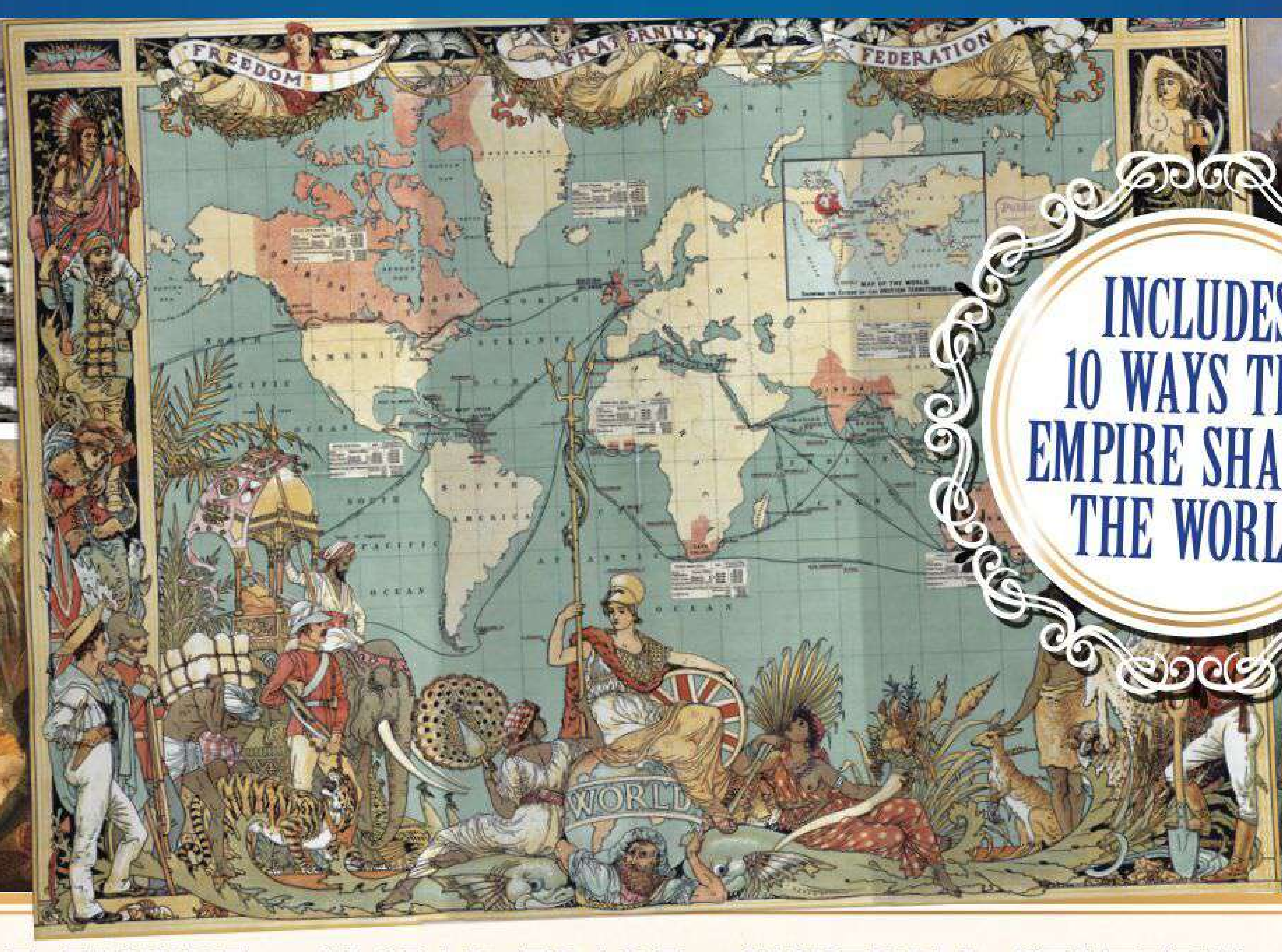
ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Book of the
BRITISH EMPIRE

The incredible story of the empire that dominated the world for 500 years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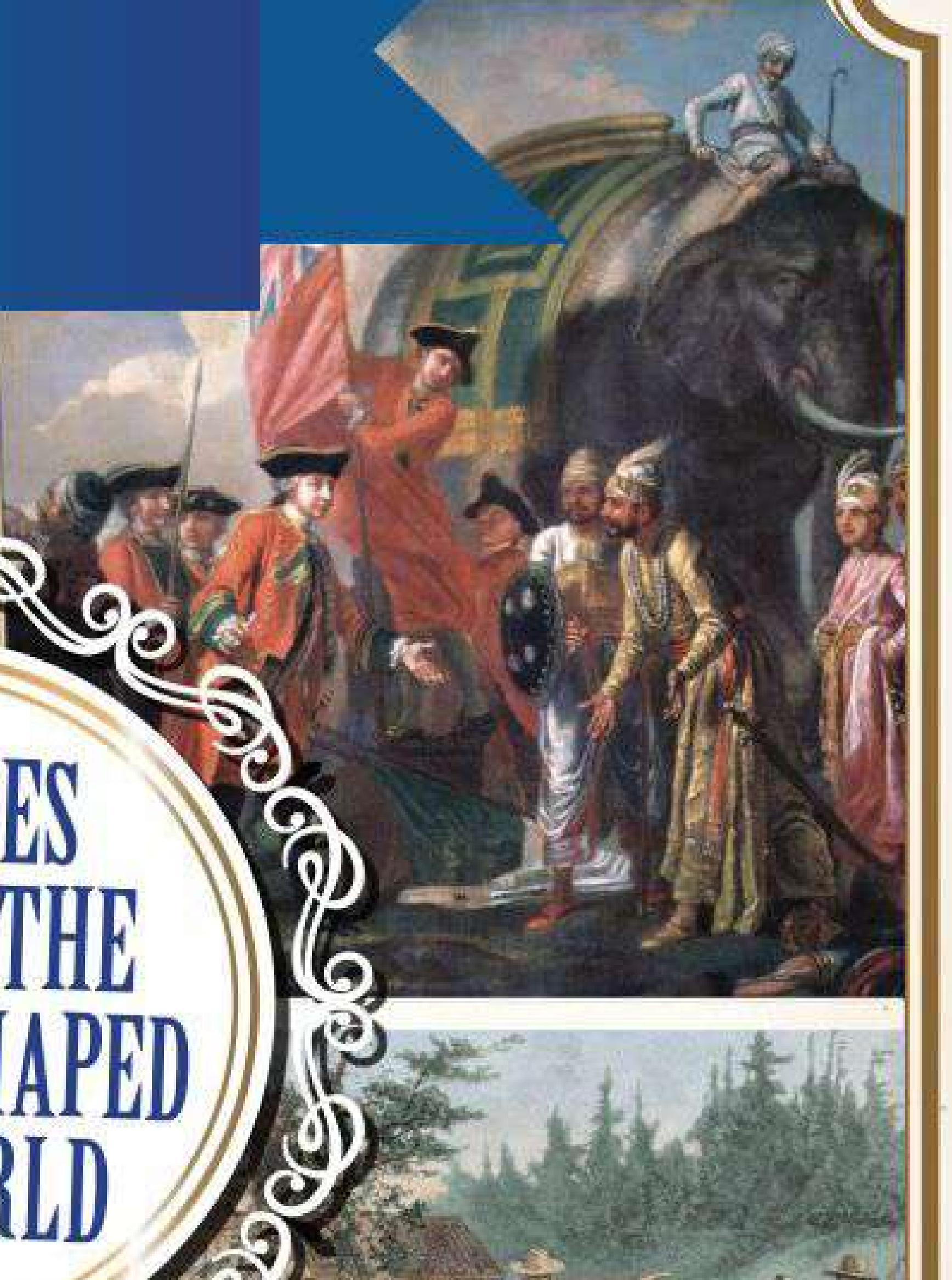
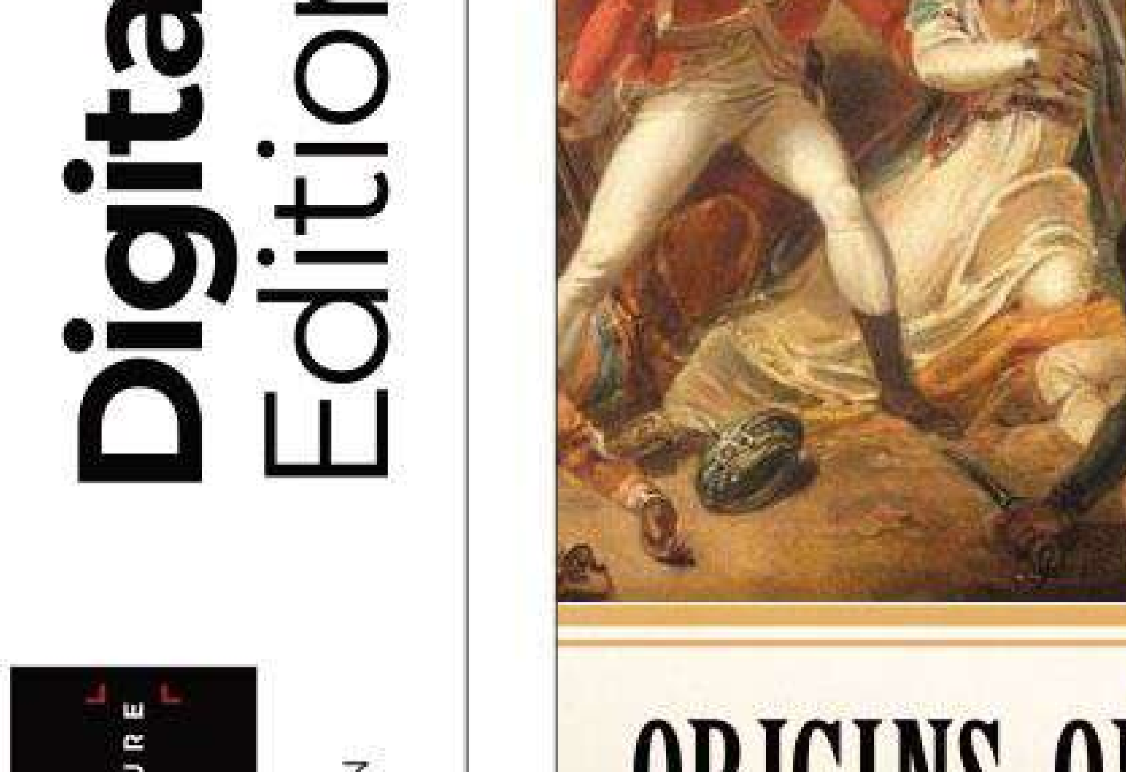
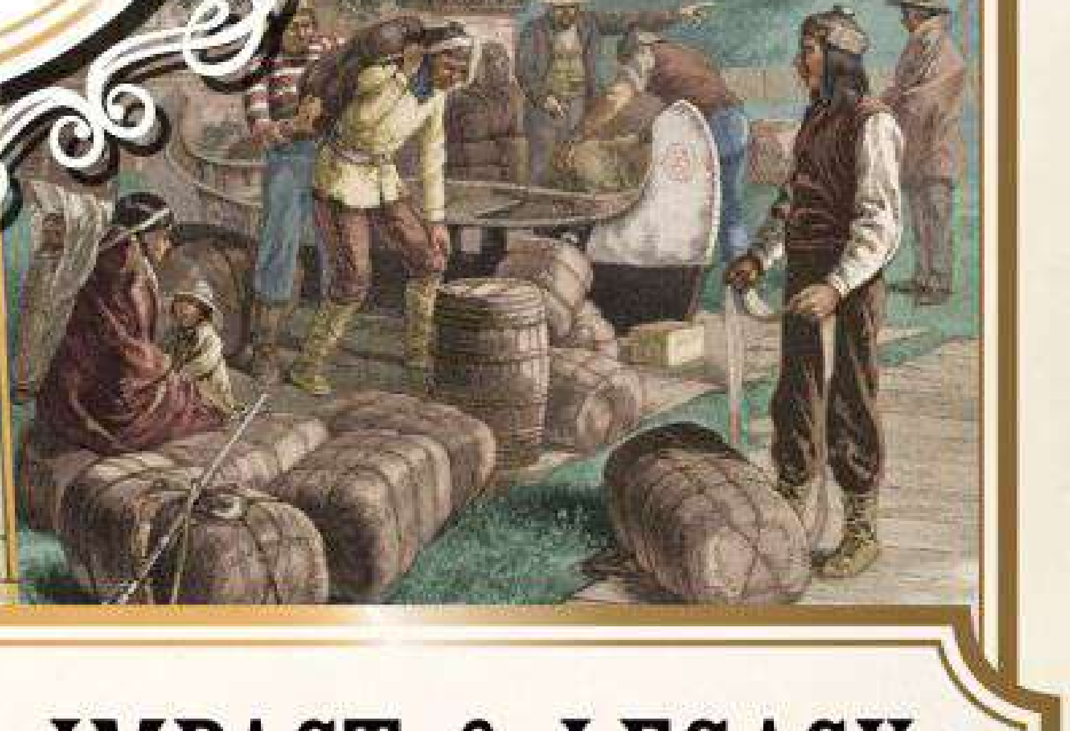


INCLUDES 10 WAYS THE EMPIRE SHAPED THE WORLD





ORIGINS OF EMPIRE ◆ GLOBAL TRADE ◆ IMPERIAL CENTURY ◆ IMPACT & LEGACY

Digital Edition
FUTURE
SIXTH EDITION

Welcome to

ALL ABOUT
HISTORY
Book of the

BRITISH EMPIRE

1497–1997

It was famously said that at the height of its power the British Empire was so vast that the Sun never set on it. To be more precise, an astonishing 33.7 million square kilometres – almost a quarter of the planet's land area – were touched by the rays of British colonialism at this time. But of course, when we talk about the empire it's not just territorial gains and losses that are involved, and by 1922 the British monarch oversaw an astounding 458 million subjects. It was the largest empire in history – a colossal feat for an insignificant bundle of islands tucked away in the chilly North Atlantic. So how did Britain manage to amass such a sprawling domain? Here, we trace the story of one nation's imperial stampede through five centuries, from its roots in the 15th century to the impact on modern-day life. Through amazing images, illustrations and articles, explore a controversial period in world history and follow the British Empire's quest to satisfy its appetite for global dominance.

FUTURE

Book of the

BRITISH EMPIRE

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Bookazine Editorial
Editor **Fiona Hudson**
Designer **Anne-Claire Pickard**
Compiled by **Sarah Bankes & Adam Markiewicz**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**

All About History Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
Art Editor **Kym Winters**
Editor in Chief **Tim Williamson**
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International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
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Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
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Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

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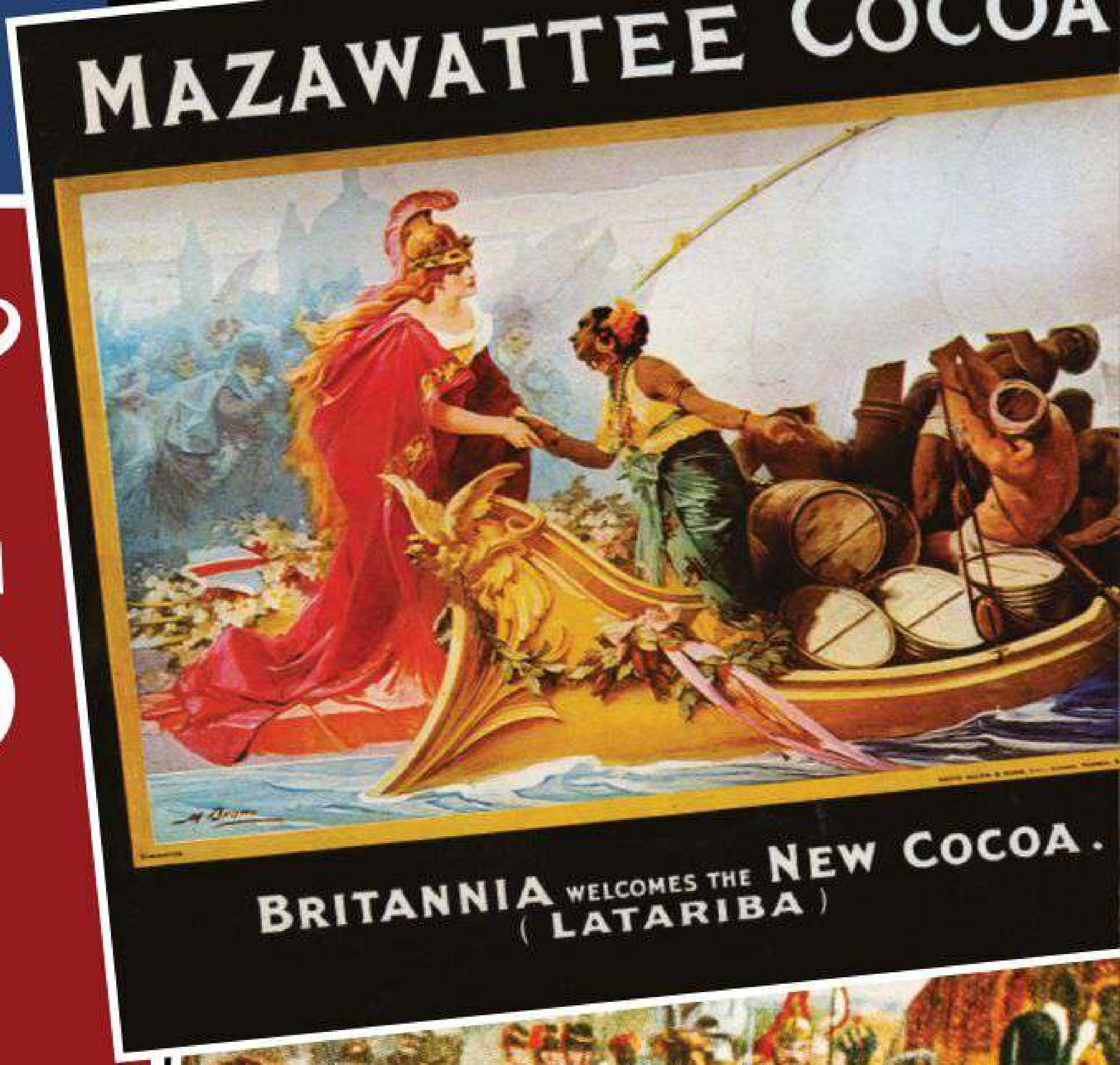
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BRITANNIA WELCOMES THE NEW COCOA.
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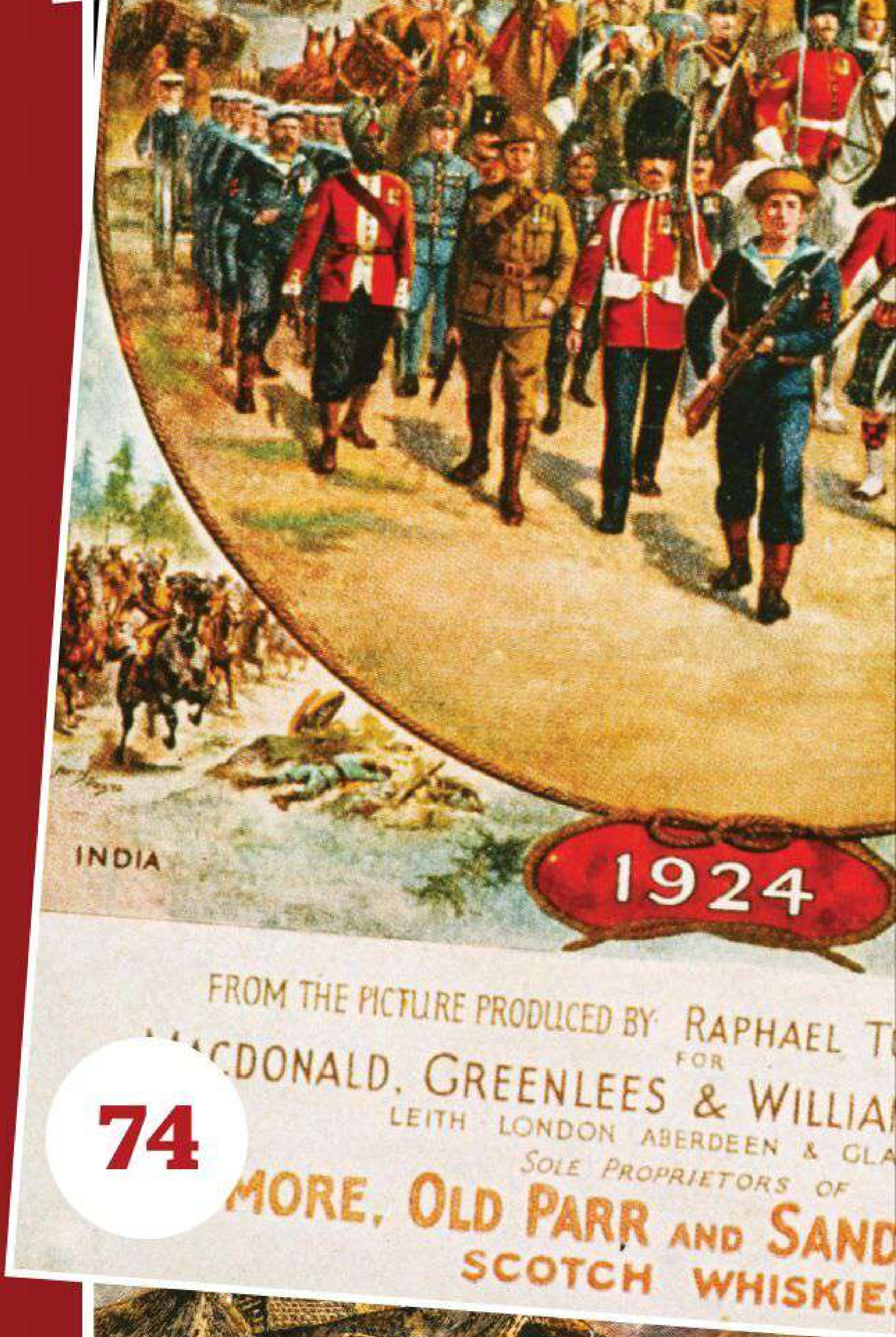
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DONALD, GREENLEES & WILLIA
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MORE, OLD PARR AND SAND
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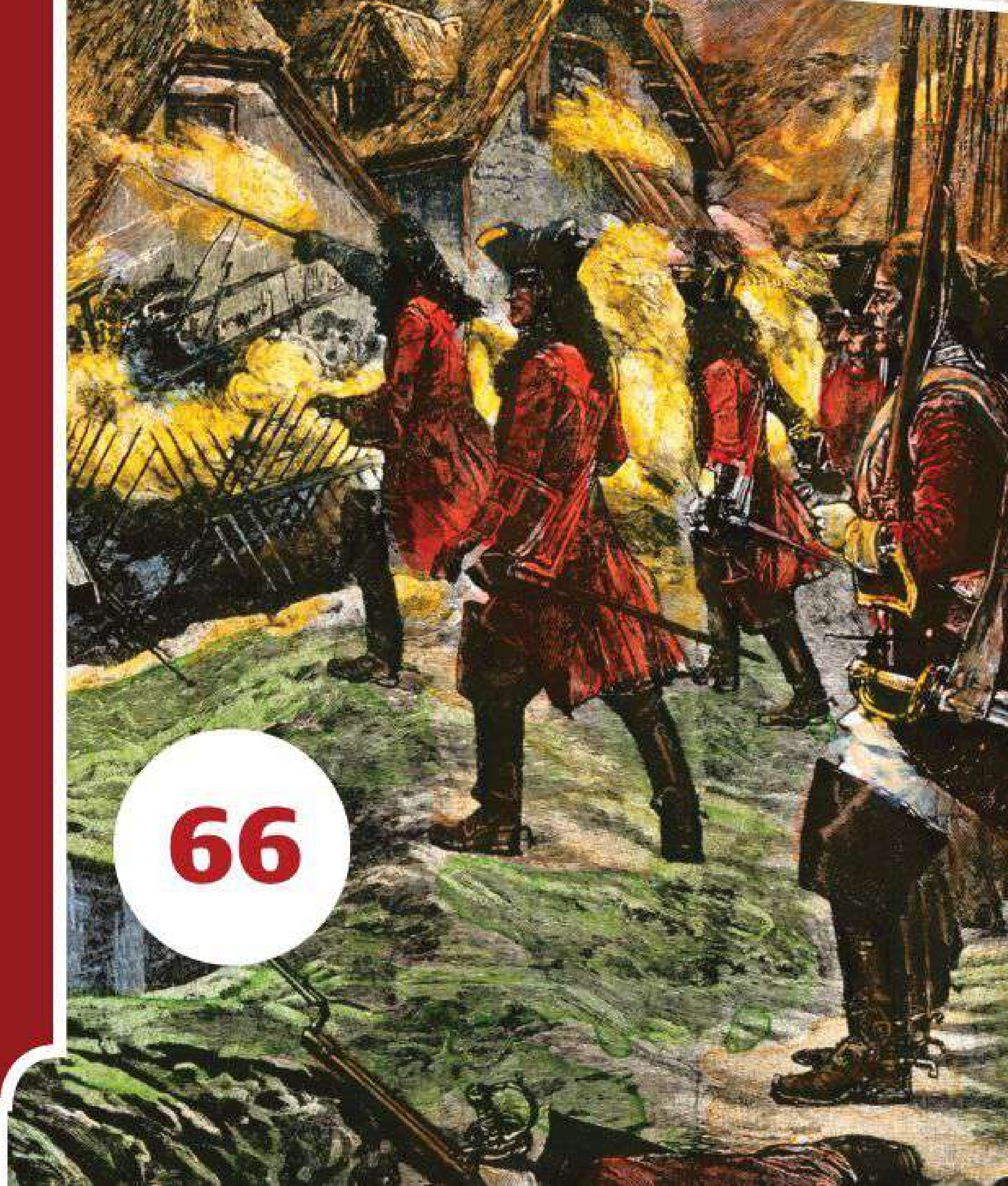

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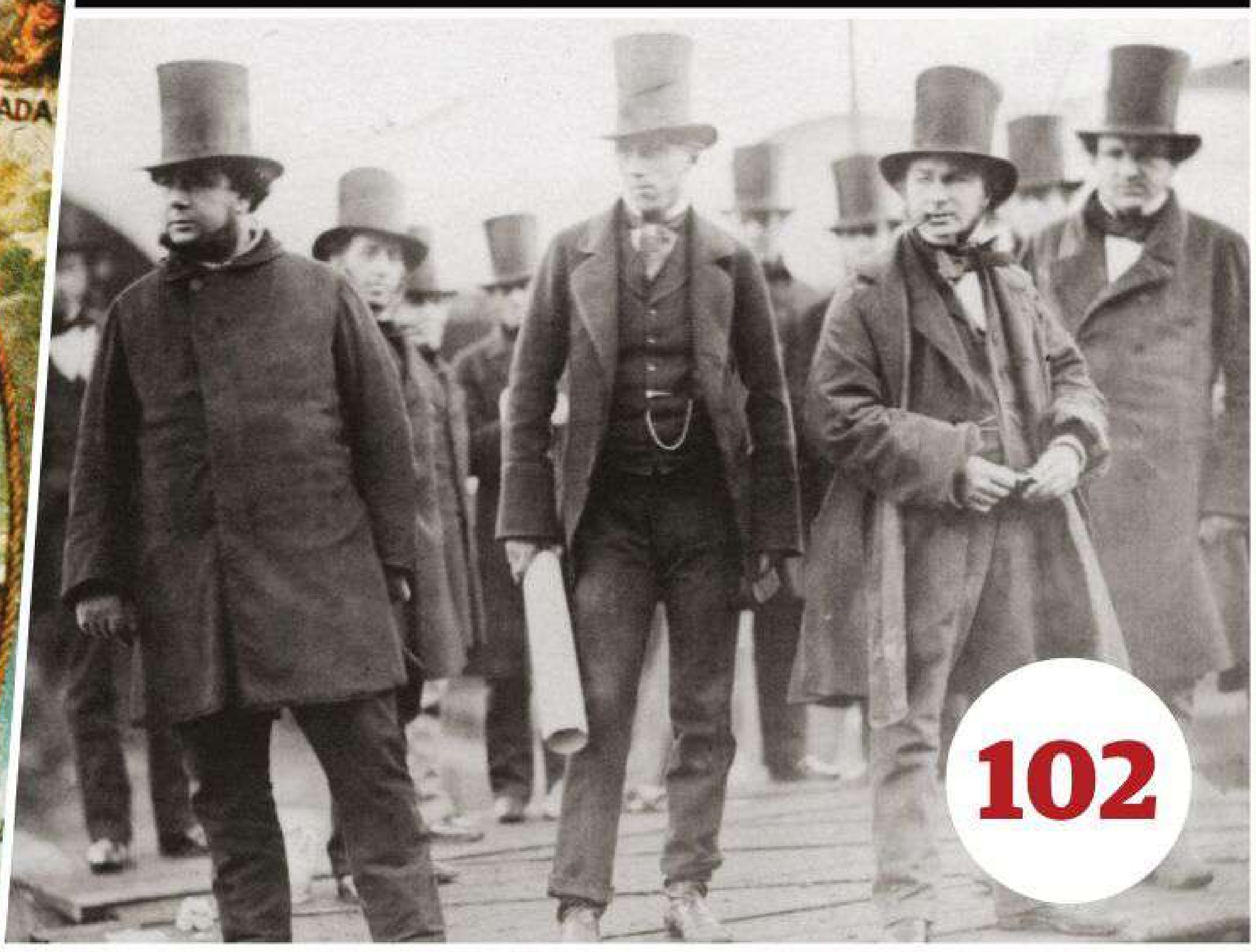

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HUDSON BAY
Arctic Circle
Edinburgh
NORTH SEA
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New Orleans
GULF OF
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WALVISCH B.
TO CAPE OF GOOD HOPE 5950 M.
BY PANAMA
Exports to the Empire beyond Sea, 1851 £20,482,706
Imports from

A TO Z OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

A 26-letter rundown on an empire that ruled the waves and dominated the globe for 500 years

The British Empire began to assert itself upon the world in the late Tudor period during the reign of Elizabeth I. Under a queen who openly encouraged exploration and trade, Britons began to make trips to lands far beyond their own nation's borders. After the spectacular defeat of the Spanish Armada, Britannia ruled the waves and was ready to start its empire building.

The strength of the Royal Navy allowed Britain to expand significantly, and by the 18th century, colonies had been set up all over the world. The abundance of land put Britain top of the pile in the world of trade, and this monopoly helped expand the economy while the military became one of the strongest on Earth. The empire would expand and contract over time, but successfully maintained its supremacy for centuries.

The empire helped spread British culture across the globe. The English language as well as features of its religion, economy, society and politics were incorporated into other cultures. At the end of World War II, it became clear that the empire had outstayed its welcome in many colonies, and began to decline. The British Empire may have crumbled, but the memory of its successes and failures will last for centuries to come.

An Australian team pictured at Niagara Falls while touring North America in 1878. By the late 19th century cricket had become an international sport

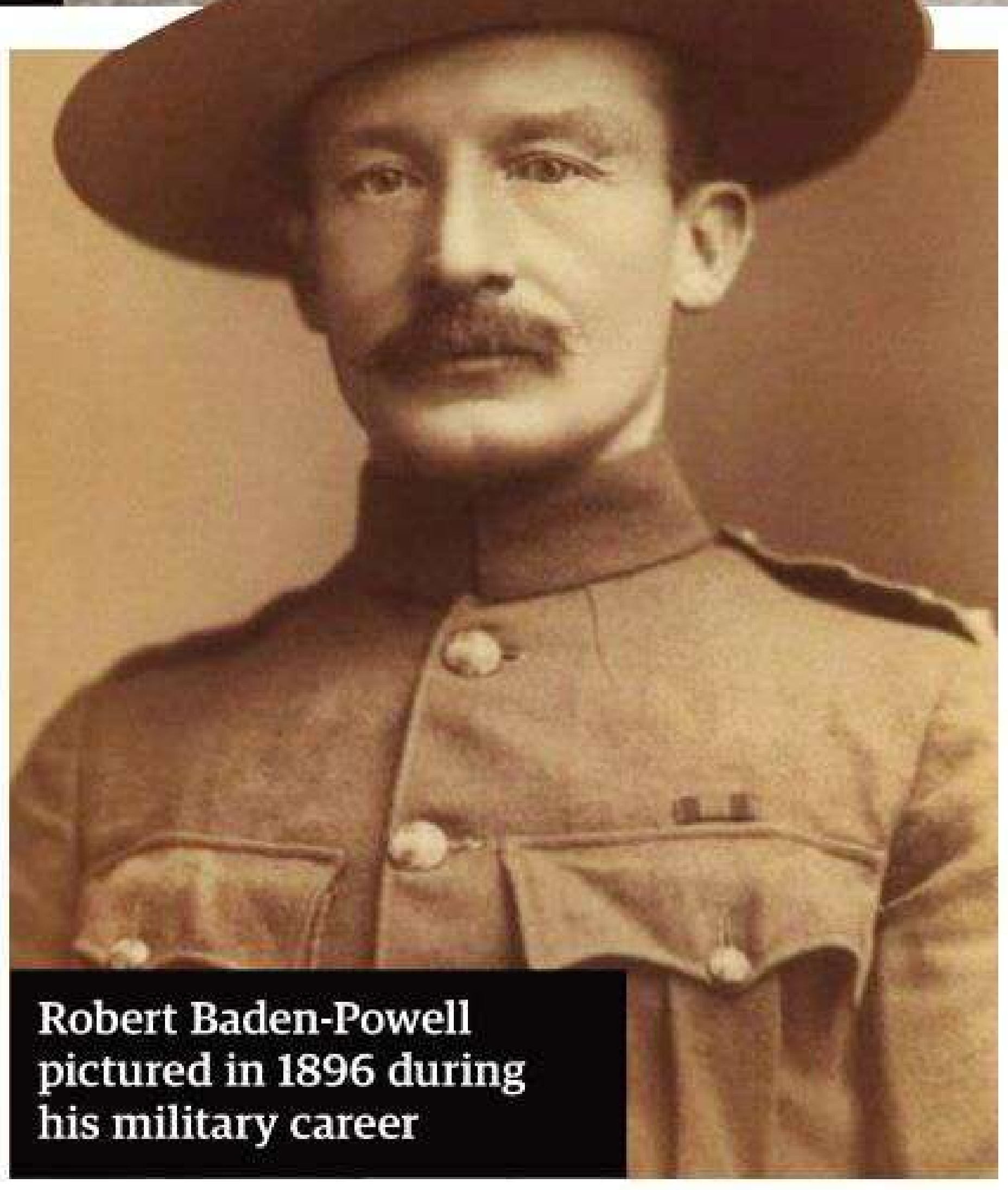
England's Test match against South Africa in 1939 lasted for a mammoth ten days and ended in a draw

Australia

From convict colony to independent settler haven

The loss of America presented Britain with many problems, not least what to do with the huge numbers of convicts now not welcome in the New World. Where would the prisoners go now? The answer was Australia. Convict colonies were first set up in 1788 when 11 ships from the 'First Fleet' arrived. In the 1800s, the country became appealing to settlers, and when gold was found in the 1850s, immigration stepped up as people made the most of the 'Australian gold rush'. The Aboriginal Australians saw their numbers dwindle due to factors like old world diseases and annexation of their land.

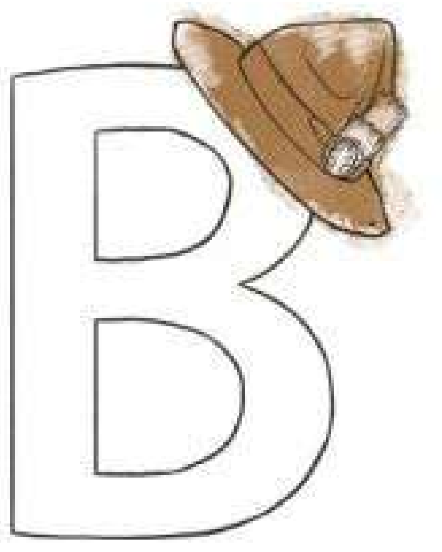
Naturally, Britain now saw the country as a useful economic tool. The gold and wool trade boomed but there were frequent conflicts between the settlers and rulers over taxes and land. In return, the Royal Navy protected Australia from the German and French empires, but this was not enough, and by the 1880s, the communities began to think of themselves as 'Australian' and the empire's grip loosened. The population was growing at three per cent a year while national wealth was increasing at double the rate of Britain's. Despite an economic slump in 1890, Australia became independent in 1901. However, Australia still rushed to help Britain in World War I as the brave Anzacs fought with distinction at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.



Robert Baden-Powell pictured in 1896 during his military career

Baden-Powell

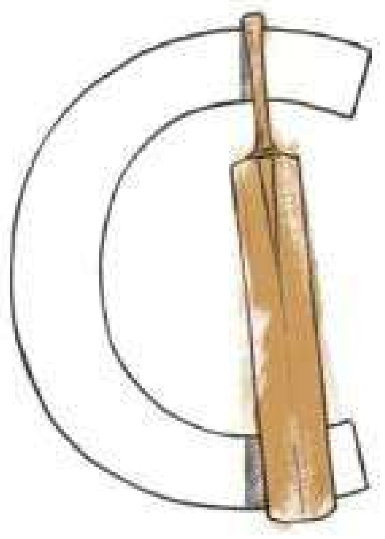
"Life without adventure would be deadly dull"



A man who always preferred the great outdoors to the confines of the classroom, Robert Baden-Powell was obsessed with adventure. The colonel's finest hour would come in Africa during the 1899-1900 Siege of Mafeking. The siege was during the Second Boer War, a vicious conflict that pitted the British Empire against the Orange Free State. 20 special service officers, including Baden-Powell, were sent to defend the frontier. They were surrounded in the town but managed to hold out against 7,000 Boers for 217 days. The now Major-General Baden-Powell was a hero, but within a few years he had turned his attention from military to scouting. The first book on the movement, *Scouting For Boys*, was written in 1908 and from here, the organisation developed rapidly.

Cricket

The game of the empire had sinister origins



Now commonly played in many Commonwealth countries, cricket's popularity spread quickly through the colonies of the British Empire. The 1787 founding of the MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) and passing of the 1788 Code of Laws kick-started the professionalisation of the sport, which was first played in Barbados in 1806 and South Africa in 1808. Cricket was also embraced elsewhere in the empire and the sound of leather on willow was heard in Australia, New Zealand, India and the Caribbean. Cricket wasn't just a sport, though – it was used as a political tool by the British. The rules and regulations were used to remind the indigenous people of the hierarchy between them and the white settlers. It reinforced racial stereotypes and was a symbol of social control. It was seen as a crude way of spreading civilised values to those who the British Empire deemed uncivil. The empire always based itself on an aura of superiority, and this control continued even after the abolition of slavery.

Cricket remained a popular pastime even after many of the colonies gained independence. Now it was the sport of the people rather than a symbol of oppression. The most famous contest between Australia and England was held in 1882. The former colony recorded a shock victory causing the *Sporting Times* to remark that "English Cricket had died." The Ashes were born and the sport became even more popular than before.

The Life of Robert Baden-Powell

Born
1857
Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell is born in London on 22 February.

Childhood
1860
Known as 'BP' or 'Stephe', he has nine siblings. Sadly, his father dies when he is just three years old.

Charterhouse
1870
Baden-Powell is educated at one of the most prestigious schools in the country.

Army career
1876
After failing to get in to college, he joins the army, becoming captain at 26.

Siege survival
1899-1900
Baden-Powell's unit holds out for 217 days in the Siege of Mafeking during the Second Boer War.

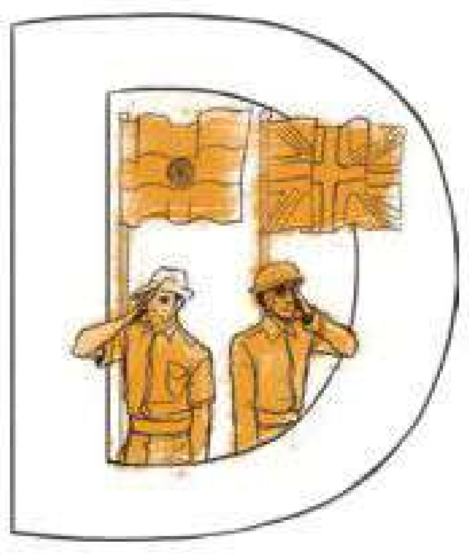
Scouting
1907-08
Leaving the army behind, he forms the Scouting Movement and publishes the bestselling book *Scouting For Boys*.

Married
1912
He meets Olave Soames, who will have three children with Baden-Powell and will help set up the Guides.

Death
1941
After years of travelling and promoting the Scouts, Baden-Powell dies on 8 January in Kenya.

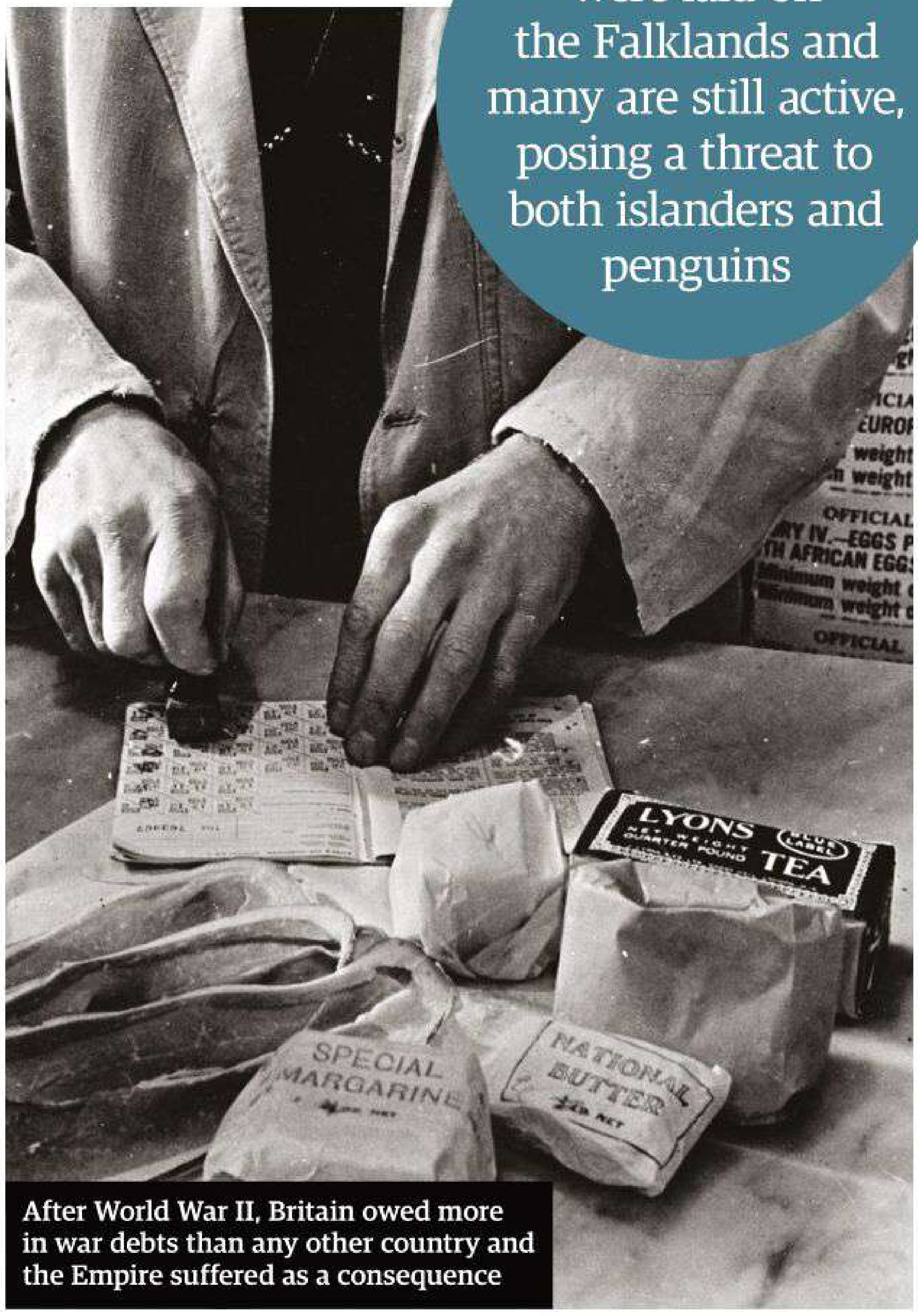
Decolonisation

The Sun sets on the British Empire



Despite emerging victorious from World War II, the conflict had adverse effects on what was now a failing empire. Britain may still have had the largest empire of all, but as two new world power blocs – the USSR and the USA – arose, the country became a weak link and, financially crippled, was forced to abandon its treasured possessions. The road to oblivion began with the 1947 partition of India, just five years after the suppression of the 'Quit India' Movement in 1942. A huge loss, the empire's military muscle was quickly diminishing. Worse was still to come with the Suez Crisis of 1956. Losing control of the economically important Suez Canal, this event wrecked Britain's financial, military and international standing further.

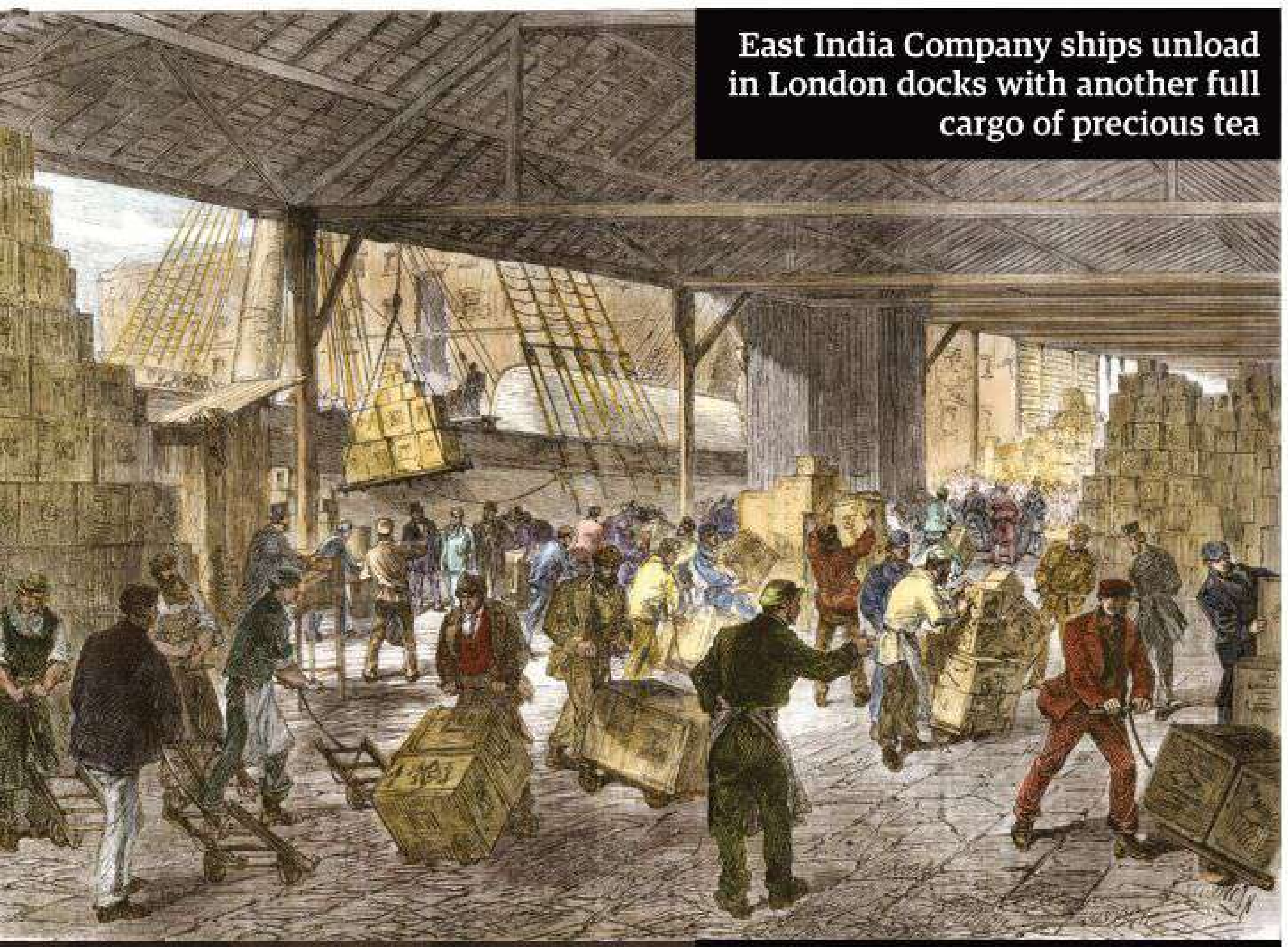
As Britain began to rebuild its fractured cities and towns after war, it had no resources to maintain an empire that had been experiencing a wave of nationalism for a long time. Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika were all independent by 1963 and the White Settler Revolt in Southern Rhodesia in 1965 was another example of the decline of British military power. The fragmentation of the empire was down to a lack of funds and British weakness, but also due to many of the colonies' profound efforts on the Allied side in the war. Britain's entry to the EEC in 1973 effectively ended its imperial ambitions, and the concept of the empire could now only be seen in traditions and culture, not frontiers and firearms.



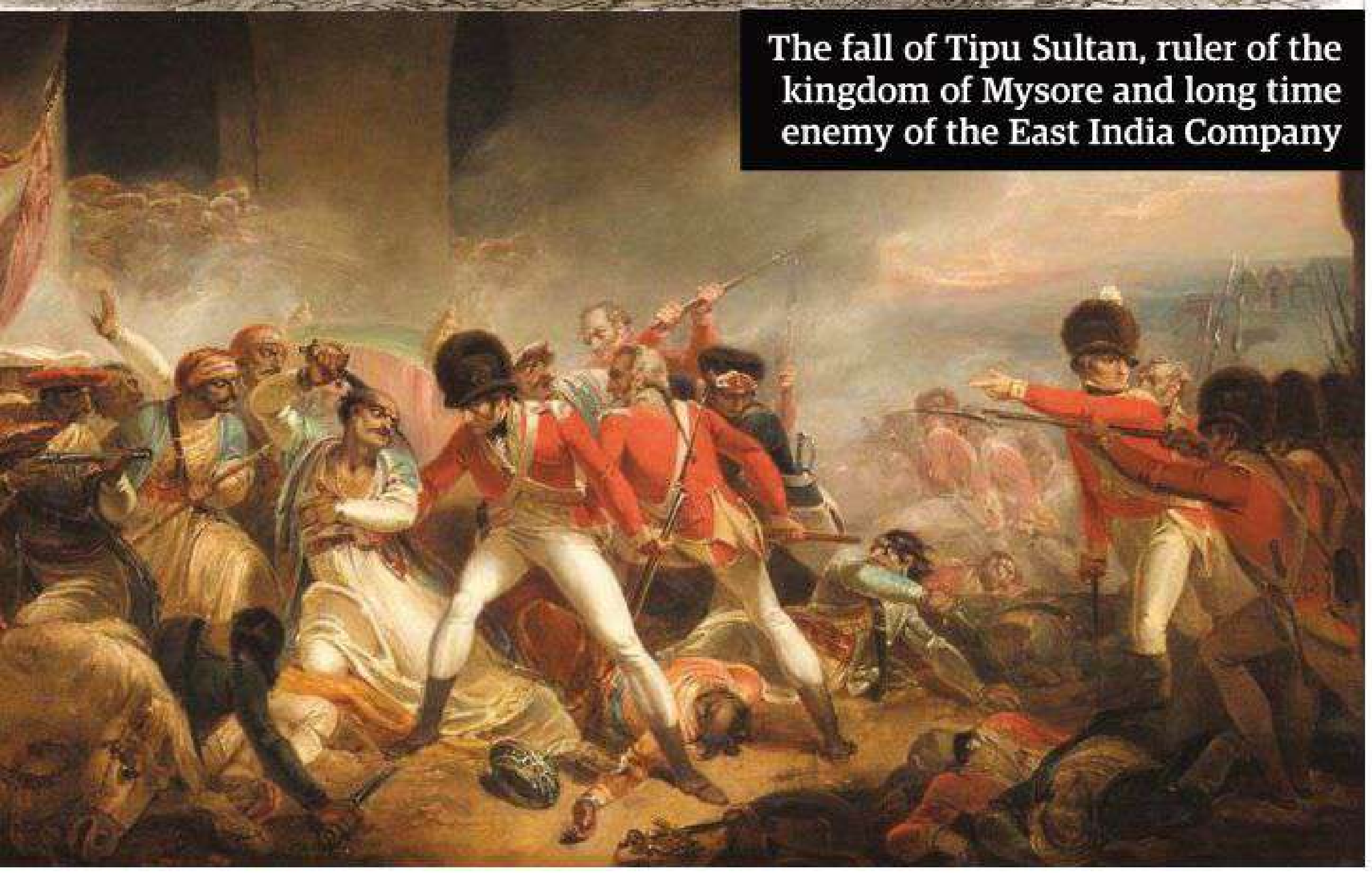
After World War II, Britain owed more in war debts than any other country and the Empire suffered as a consequence

East India Company

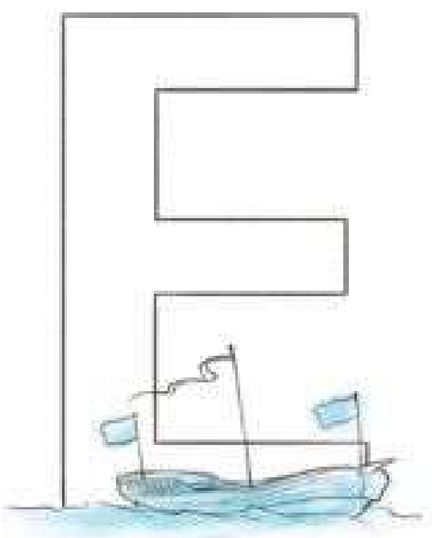
The company that evolved from minor trader to outright ruler



East India Company ships unload in London docks with another full cargo of precious tea



The fall of Tipu Sultan, ruler of the kingdom of Mysore and long time enemy of the East India Company



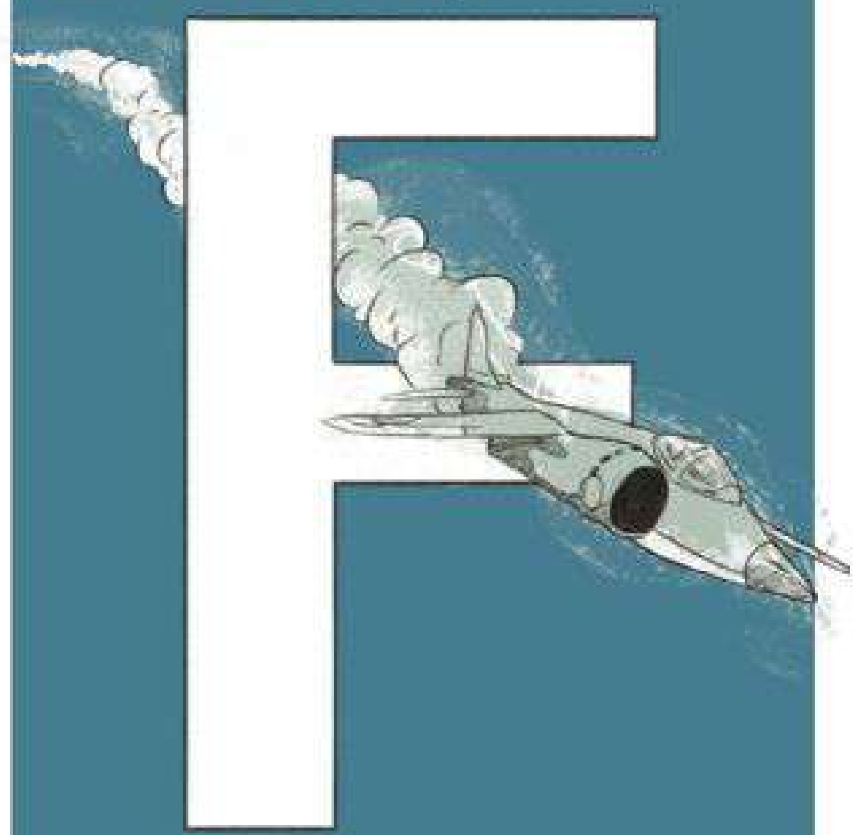
One of the Empire's major institutions, the East India Company was a business juggernaut at its peak. The organisation's roots originate in 1601 when British ships first set sail to the 'East Indies'. Hearing of the wealth of spices and materials available, more and more ships made the journey and the trade links began to grow. The British weren't the first European power to make the journey, but they pumped resources into the business venture. By 1690, it had trading centres all over the west and east coasts of India. As British influence increased and the Indian Mughal Empire weakened, trade began to turn into occupation. The company could now charge high taxes and defend its interest with force. This had a disastrous effect on the local Indian communities who saw their economy and society effectively taken over.

The East India Company was at its most profitable in the first half of the 18th century as Indian cotton was being mass exported, providing the British consumer with cheap, good-quality clothing. The company soon began to take more than it was giving and started to meddle in Indian politics. This caught the attention of the British government, who put the firm under government control in 1783. The East India Company is an example of British trade outstaying its welcome, and its harsh affect on India helped develop a nationalist feeling within the country. By 1858, it was abolished completely and the British Raj was created.

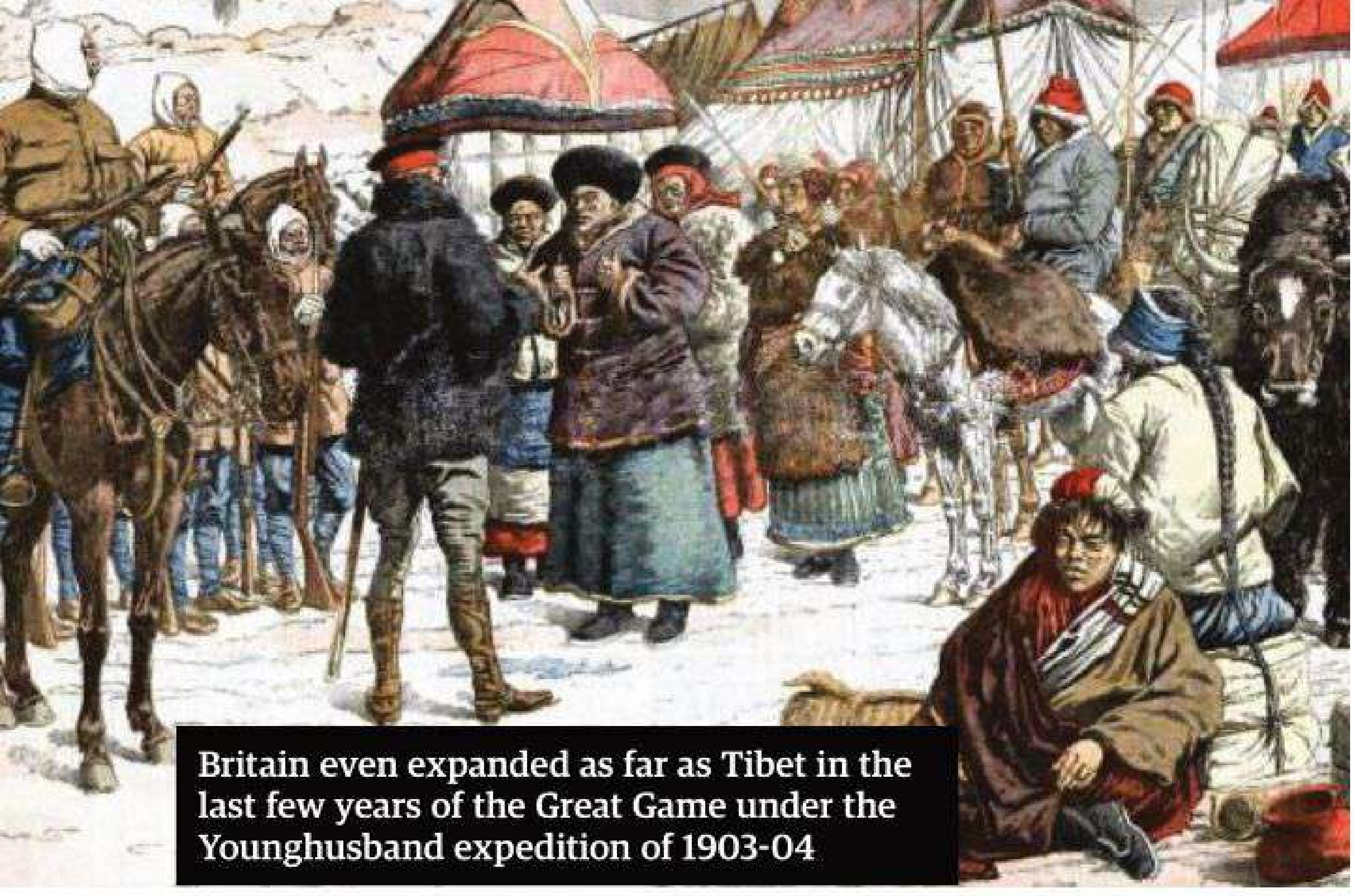
25,000 mines were laid on the Falklands and many are still active, posing a threat to both islanders and penguins

Falklands War

The nation's determined cling to territory



By the 1980s the empire was no more, but Britain was still determined to protect what was left of its legacy. The Falkland Islands, a remote colony in the South Atlantic, was one of the few remaining territories. Neighbouring Argentina's military dictatorship, under Leopoldo Galtieri, decided to invade on 2 April 1982, citing its inheritance from Spain and geographical location as reasons for its occupation. Going against advice from other nations, Margaret Thatcher's government decided the UK had to fight back. The conflict lasted for two months and 649 Argentine and 255 British servicemen lost their lives, along with three islanders. The Argentinean surrender came on 13 July.



Britain even expanded as far as Tibet in the last few years of the Great Game under the Younghusband expedition of 1903-04

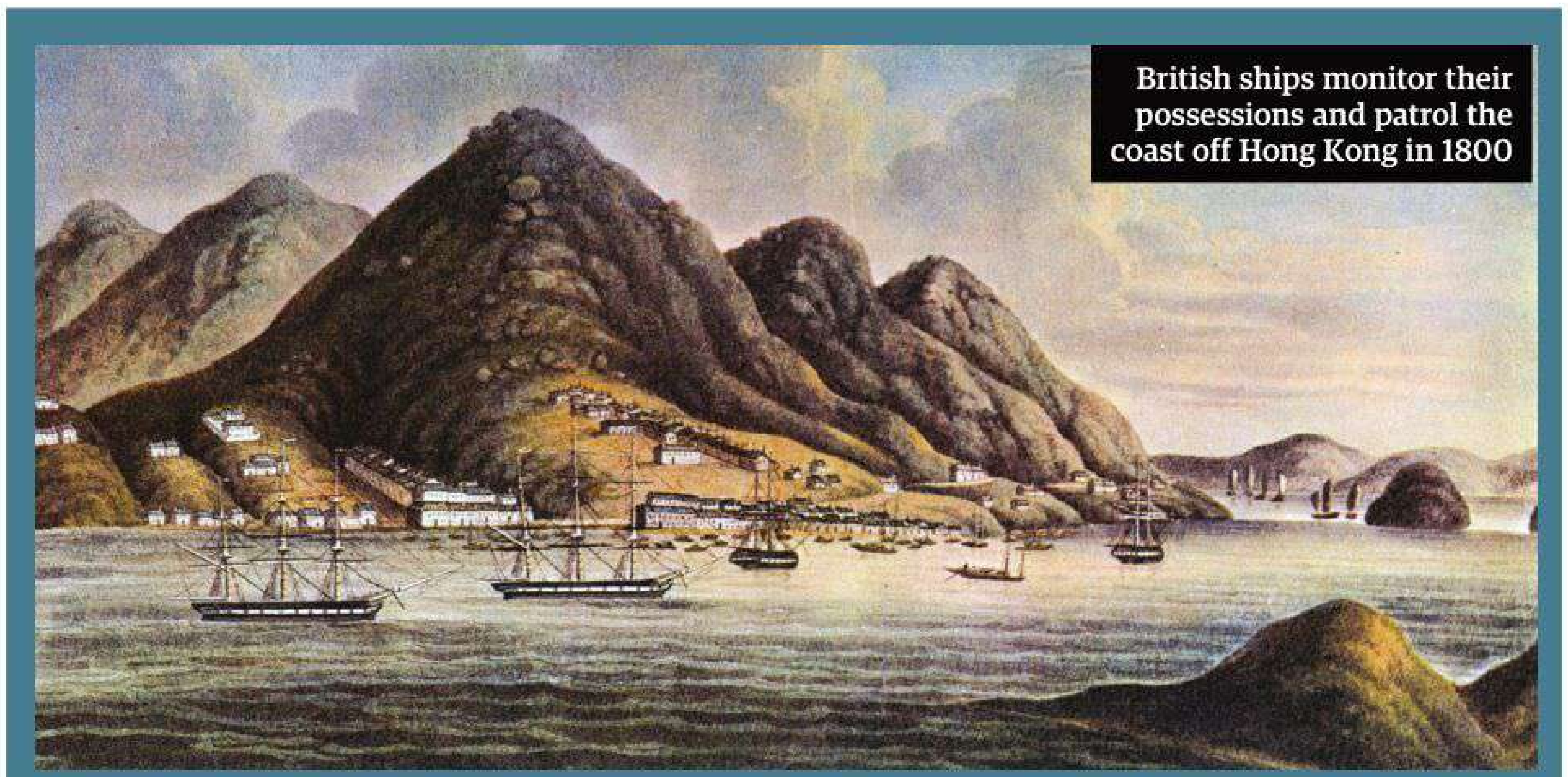
Great Game

The 19th-century Cold War that put Britain and Russia on the brink of war

The signing of the Russo-Persian Treaty in 1813 alarmed the British. Concerned at the recent expansion of Russian interests in Asia, the British Crown moved to protect India by expanding its own empire northwards. The battleground between the two blocs ended up being Afghanistan, which acted as a buffer zone between the two powers. Britain wanted to use Afghanistan for its own imperial ends, resulting in three Anglo-Afghan wars. The most prominent was the Second Anglo-Afghan war, in which a British victory gained a new protectorate for the empire.

The Great Game also played out in Persia. Originally an ally of the British, Persia switched its support to Russia in 1825 and was persuaded in 1837 to attack Herat, a British territory in Afghanistan. The attack was beaten back by the British but Persia stayed Russian until the Crimean War in 1853. The Great Game officially ceased with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, ending almost 100 years of tension and conflict. Persia was divided between the two superpowers and Afghanistan remained a British protectorate until it gained independence after World War I.

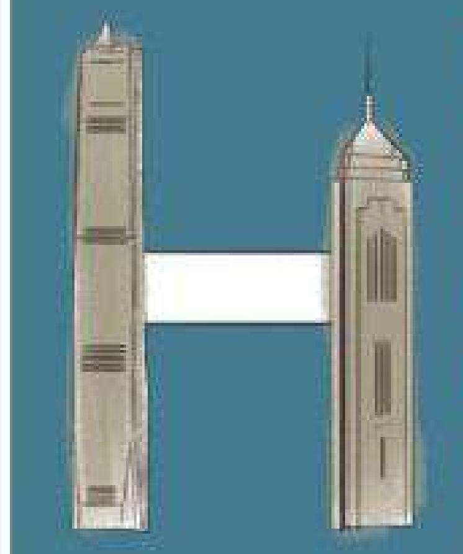
> The phrase 'Great Game' was coined by British Intelligence officer Arthur Conolly and popularised by Rudyard Kipling



British ships monitor their possessions and patrol the coast off Hong Kong in 1800

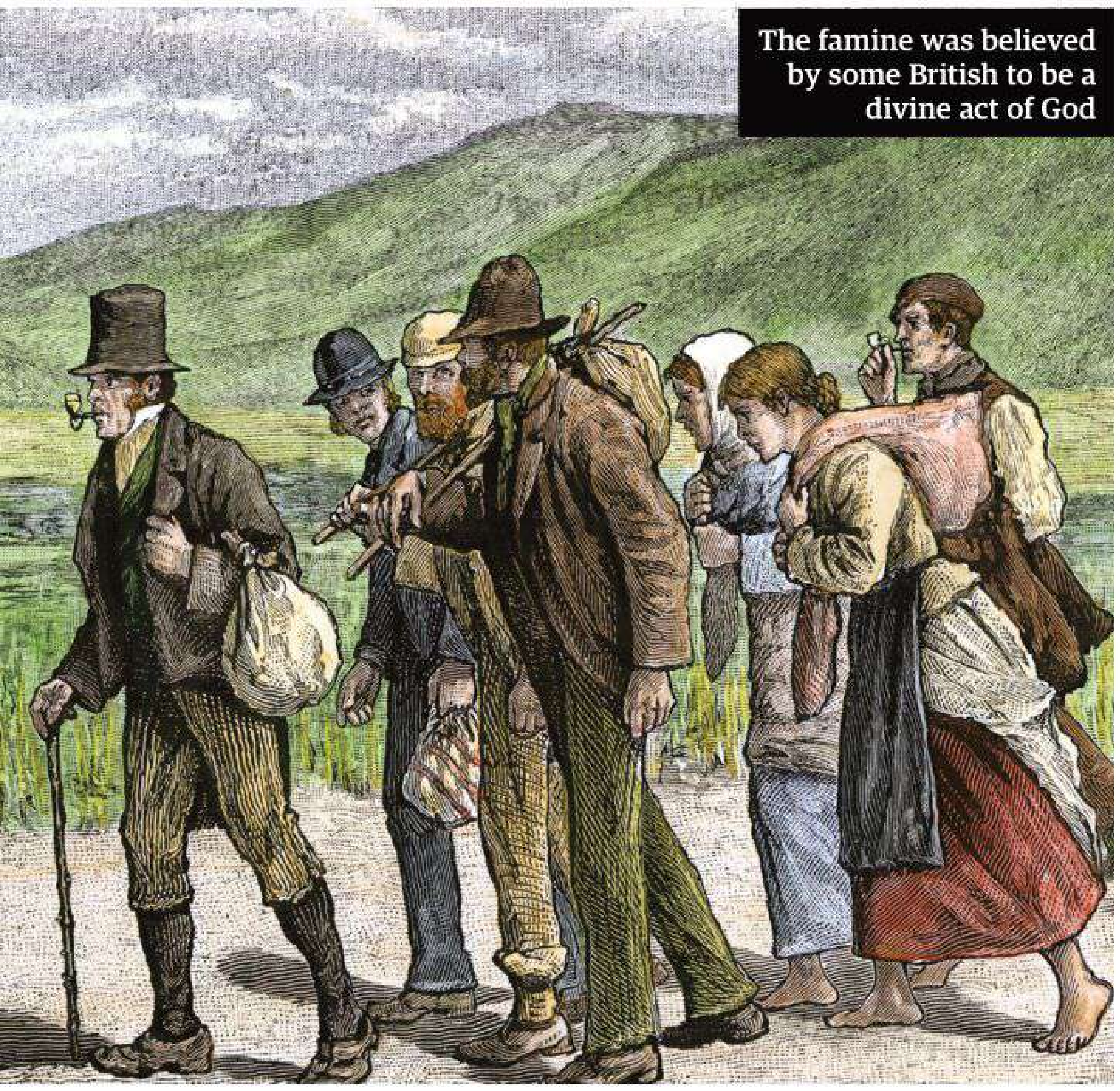
Hong Kong

An important trading centre that was almost constantly ravaged by war and conflict



The East India Company arrived in Hong Kong in 1635 keen to trade with both the Chinese and the Portuguese, who had major cartels in the area. Silk, spices and tea were essential commodities for the British, but trade was restricted by the Chinese government, who insisted that all trade went through the port of Canton and select Chinese merchants. By the 1800s, opium had become the major product in the region and, in an effort to end the first Opium War, Hong Kong was ceded to the British in 1841.

After the wars were over, Britain signed a lease in 1898 that gave it ownership over the island for 99 years. During World War II, the island was completely taken over by the Japanese. The occupation lasted until 1945, but afterwards, Hong Kong was forced to adapt to the new communist China. It adjusted well, with an economic revival in the 1950s that helped it develop into a financial powerhouse by the 1970s. In 1997, the British lease on Hong Kong expired and China demanded its return. The British government initially tried to negotiate but soon realised the potential administrative and economic difficulties, and backed down. Hong Kong's loss represented the last economically viable colony to leave the Empire. The imperial adventure was over.



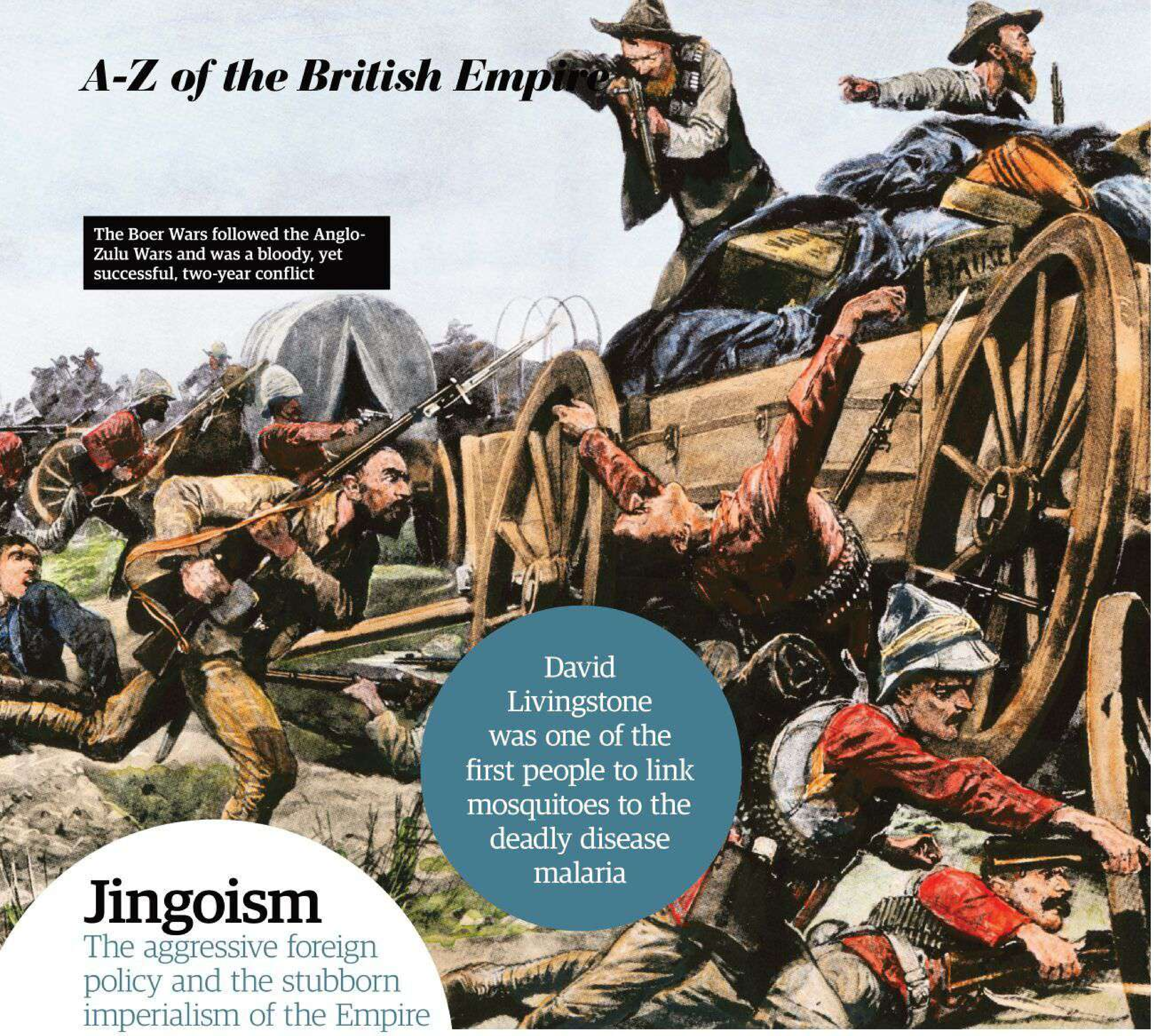
The famine was believed by some British to be a divine act of God

Irish famine

More than 1 million people died in a disaster that the British government failed to act upon and improve

The effects of the potato famine were devastating for the Emerald Isle. An estimated 1 million (a staggering eighth of the country's population) died and 1 million more emigrated elsewhere to avoid the famine. Potatoes had been the staple food of Ireland, but became inedible as a late blight disease spread around the crops, turning them into black gooey messes. A 50 per cent loss in crops crippled the country for three successive harvests from 1845-47.

The British Whig and Tory governments decided to be as laissez-faire as possible over the issue of Ireland. Preventing the export of Irish grain to elsewhere would have been an effective policy, but it was not enacted as the government virtually disengaged itself from the problems of the famine. Ireland did have supplies of corn sent over, but either it was not distributed efficiently, there was no machinery to turn it into flour or it was too pricey for the average Irish person to afford. Also critical was the cancellation of the soup-kitchen scheme after only six months, which was an efficient system that fed 3 million people on a daily basis. The idea of feeding Ireland was simply not on the Whig or Tory agenda and was not considered an imperial responsibility. A few public works were attempted to relieve the situation but, overall, the British government's ideology of free trade prevented any sort of structured aid. For many, emigration was the only option and the population of Ireland headed to the harbours as America and the New World beckoned.



The Boer Wars followed the Anglo-Zulu Wars and was a bloody, yet successful, two-year conflict

David Livingstone was one of the first people to link mosquitoes to the deadly disease malaria

Jingoism

The aggressive foreign policy and the stubborn imperialism of the Empire

Jingoism – the nationalistic and patriotic belief that your country is best – was rife within the empire, especially at its peak in the late-19th century. The aggressive shows of force by Britain to maintain and expand its empire were naturally exaggerated by the press, and clever propaganda spin put almost anything the empire did in a positive light.

The rise of other superpowers such as Germany and Russia only helped fuel jingoism, resulting in arrogant ideology such as 'splendid isolation' and the naval arms race. Invasion literature of the era such as HG Wells's *The War Of The Worlds* also stoked the fires of Russophobia and paranoia. Jingoism wasn't a new phenomenon (Britain had always had fierce rivalries with Spain and France, for instance) but politicians were worried that a working-class electorate was dangerous to British politics. Both the Conservatives and Liberals came to realise that an assertive foreign policy was the best way to appeal to the public. The wave of jingoism lasted until World War I, when the Great War changed people's perception of conflict forever.

Kitchener

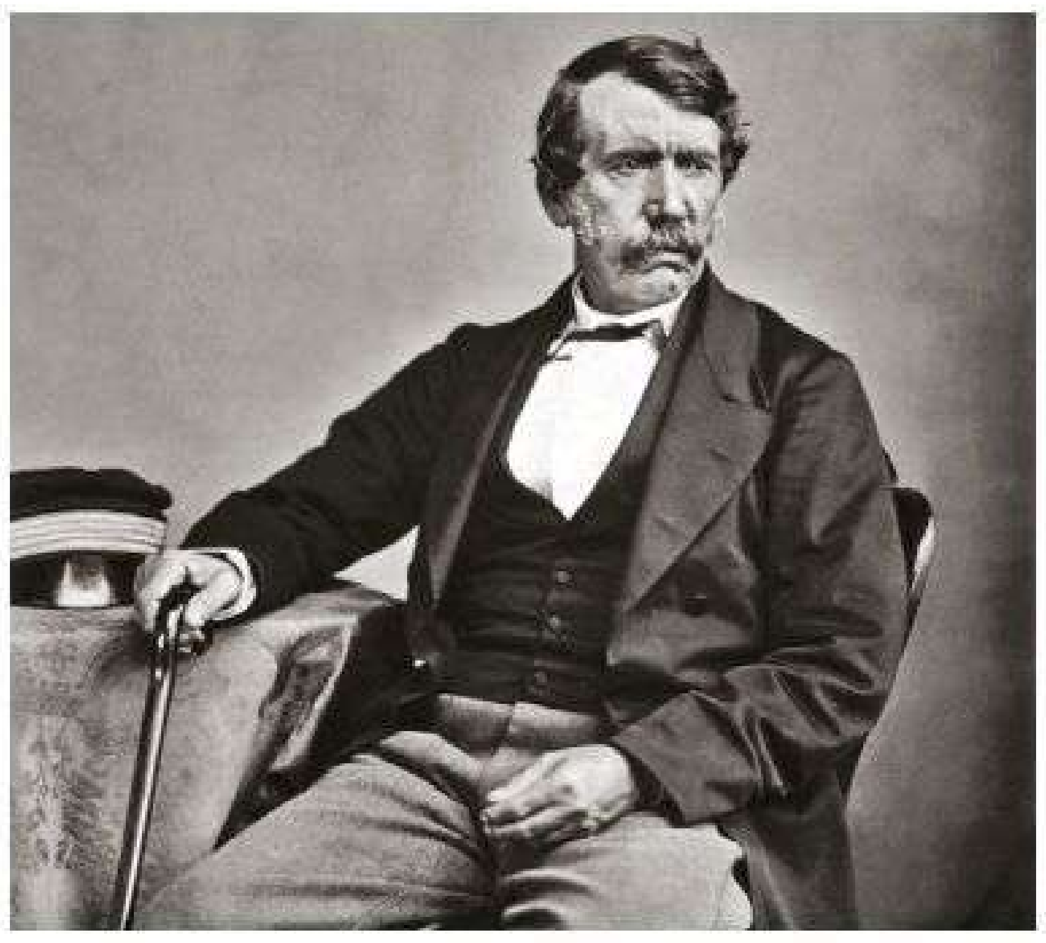
The British military leader who was immortalised in the famous army recruitment poster

Born in Ireland and educated in Switzerland, Horatio Kitchener (and his instantly recognisable moustache) are now iconic images of Britain and its empire. Kitchener's military career was extensive and lasted from 1871 until his death in 1916.

Beginning as a royal engineer, Kitchener's career soon took off, and by 1886 he was appointed governor general of Eastern Sudan. This upward trajectory continued and his efforts in the Mahdist War, and in particular the victory at the battle of Omdurman, made him a national hero back in Britain. Kitchener's methods were not all popular though, and his use of concentration camps in the Boer War was severely criticised.

Nevertheless, Kitchener was made a viscount in 1902 and was promoted to secretary of state for war at the outbreak of war in 1914. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Kitchener foresaw a long conflict and acted accordingly, creating the New Army. However, it was here that his career took a turn for the worse. He was notoriously difficult to work with and his support for the poorly planned Dardanelles campaign was a turning point; then the shell crisis of 1915 damaged his stock even further.

Kitchener didn't survive the war and was killed when aboard the HMS Hampshire, which was sunk on 5 June 1916 by a German mine while on a mission to encourage Russian resistance against Germany. Kitchener had questionable methods when it came to war, but he is remembered for the sheer number of men he organised at the start of World War I and, of course, that poster.

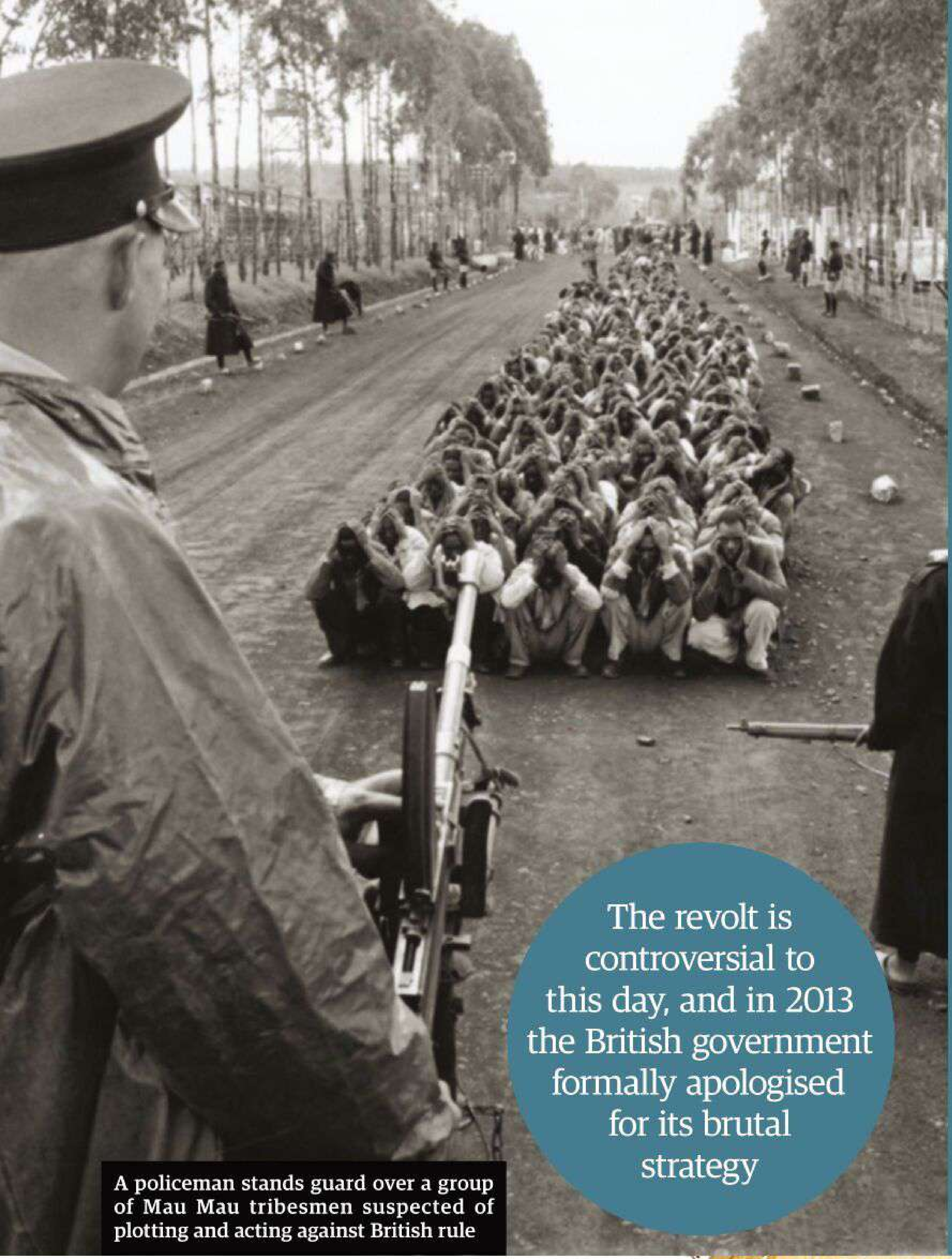


Livingstone

A man who devoted his life to exploring many new countries

David Livingstone was born into working-class Glaswegian life and was taught to read and write by his father. Studying at Anderson's University, he had soon gathered enough funds to move to London. By 1841, his dream of exploration was realised and he was posted to Africa as a missionary doctor. Livingstone was a man of God, and upon reaching the Kalahari Desert region of Africa, he began converting many of the locals to Christianity. As well as his religious values, he learned about the true extent of the horrors of the slave trade and explored Botswana and lake Nagmi.

Livingstone made several trips to Africa and, whether on foot, canoe or ox-back, he regularly diced with death from wild animal attack or disease. Meeting many local tribes, Livingstone's writings helped advance knowledge of the slave trade and the dangers of malaria and scurvy. Government funding ran out in the late 1850s, but by 1866, the Scot had accumulated enough funds of his own to finance another trip. This time, the destination was the source of the River Nile. It would end up being his final expedition. With almost no crew left and suffering from pneumonia, Livingstone went missing and was only found in October 1871 in Ujiji, Tanzania. Physically exhausted but always dedicated to his job, Livingstone died in May 1873. The British Empire owes him greatly for mapping out vast swathes of the previously uncharted African continent.



A policeman stands guard over a group of Mau Mau tribesmen suspected of plotting and acting against British rule

The revolt is controversial to this day, and in 2013 the British government formally apologised for its brutal strategy

Mau Mau

A bloody uprising that shook the foundations of an already failing empire

In the post-World War II world, a wave of nationalism spread over Africa. The rule of the European powers was coming to an end as decolonisation took place. The British Empire was one of the nations to take the brunt of this nationalistic drive, especially in Kenya. Known as the Mau Mau Rebellion, the aim of the revolt was to completely eradicate all forms of British rule in Kenya. The first anti-British secret meetings were held in August 1951 in the capital Nairobi, and the Mau Mau oath was taken by every member. By October 1952, the frequent arson attacks and assassinations carried out by the Mau Mau had finally caught the attention of the British government, who sent troops over immediately. The uprising had escalated.

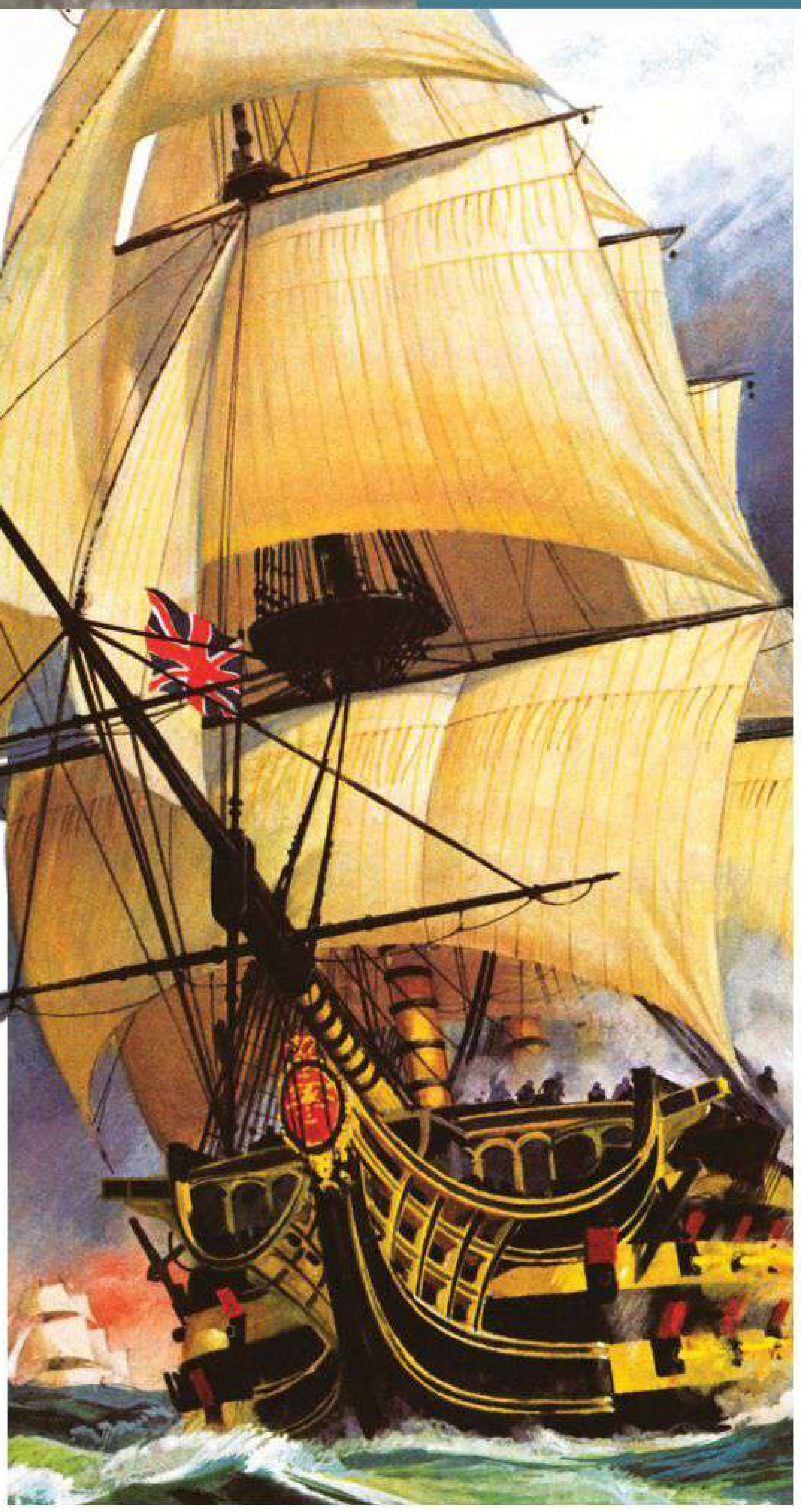
A state of emergency was declared in Kenya as hostilities continued. 40 people, both white settlers and black non-Mau Mau followers, were murdered in the space of just four weeks as the Mau Mau was officially declared a terrorist organisation. British soldiers responded by arresting thousands of insurgents and cordoning off tribal lands to restrict Mau Mau movement. By 1954, the rebellion was lessening as more leaders were captured and interrogated. An offer of amnesty was tendered by the British, but this was blankly rejected and the killings continued. By 1955, 70,000 suspected Mau Mau were imprisoned, slowing the uprising which led to the state of emergency finally ending in 1959. The uprising was a bloody episode that demonstrated the wane of European power in Africa and was a catalyst towards Kenya's independence in 1963.

Nelson

The naval genius who expected every man to do his duty

Horatio Nelson was one of the greatest military minds to ever grace the Royal Navy. Raised in a small village in Norfolk, he began his naval career at the age of 12 as an apprentice midshipman. The young man's talents shone through and he was fast-tracked through the ranks, making captain in 1779. Prior to Trafalgar, Nelson served in the Americas and the Caribbean. The Battle of St Vincent in 1797 was one of his earliest victories as the Royal Navy struck a devastating and critical blow to the Armada Española. Now revered at home, Nelson once again utilised his genius with a stunning victory over the French at the Battle of the Nile in 1798. Once an admiral, Nelson found time to defeat a strong force at Copenhagen in 1801.

What Nelson will be best remembered for, and what the British Empire is forever grateful to him for, however, is Trafalgar. The War of the Third Coalition was raging on mainland Europe, but Nelson helped the Navy score an impressive victory. The victory cost him his life but confirmed his place in history.



Opium Wars

Two conflicts that had a lasting effect on the Far East

Opium was big business for the British Empire. A commodity that sold big in China, its trade helped finance the British demand for tea and silk. However, the downside to the business was the nasty effects opium had, with addiction to the drug becoming a problem. When the Chinese government realised what was happening to their people, they imposed restrictions on the trade, denting British profits. The result was war.

The first war began after the Chinese destroyed 20,000 chests of opium. To support their interests the British government sent an expeditionary force to occupy the city of Canton in May 1841, and the capture of Nanking in August ended the war with a British victory. The second war was larger in scale as the French waded into the conflict. Military operations began in late 1856 and by 1858 British gunboat diplomacy had forced the Chinese into negotiations. A number of treaties legalised the importation of opium once again but hostilities resumed when the Chinese shelled the British in June 1859. Angered, the British and French returned with a huge force in August 1860 and captured Beijing, ending the war once and for all.

Penal colonies

The Empire had many prisoners who all needed to be locked up

Perhaps one of the most efficient uses of America for the British Empire was its role as a huge prison. An estimated, 50,000 of the empire's convicts were sent to the New World, making up a quarter of all British settlers during the 1700s. The first convicts were sent over in 1718 under the government's new Transportation Act, which introduced mass penal transportation to what are now the states of Virginia and Maryland. When the 13 colonies were lost after the American Revolution, Britain needed to create more penal colonies to lock away its criminals. Initially, many of the convicts were held upon ships (prison hulks) on the River Thames and forced to clean the river, but this was not a long-term solution. In 1786, an answer was found, and penal colonies were set up in Australia, the Caribbean, India and Singapore.

The British Empire was by no means the only empire to utilise penal colonies, but it did oversee some of the most extensive. The theory was that criminals could provide cheap labour on plantations and workhouses while being totally disconnected from the rest of the populace. It all changed in 1779 as the Penitentiary Act authorised the opening of state prisons that aimed to end corruption in jails. The introduction of penal colonies was an ambitious project, but it eased the pressure on the empire and was a sustainable solution to Britain's huge number of convicts.

Queen Victoria

The long-standing monarch who was famous for being not amused

Queen Victoria ruled Britain in an era of prosperity and relative peace. Her rule coincided with a long period named 'Pax Britannica', in which Britain became the leading empire of the world. Victoria married her German cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in 1840 and the couple went on to reign over an immensely popular monarchy.

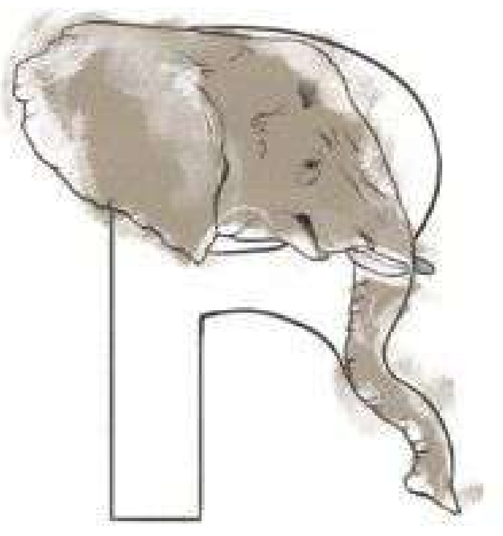
The Victorian age is remembered for industrial expansion and economic progress, but also development in the arts and science, such as the Great Exhibition of 1851. Britain functioned as a constitutional monarchy with the queen occasionally having an input in politics.

Conflict broke out in 1854 in the form of the Crimean War. The conflict saw the first awarding of the Victoria Cross in 1856, a medal that would become the pinnacle of military achievement in Britain. Domestically, Britain advanced rapidly with the Industrial Revolution in full flow. In 100 years, the population grew from 16 to 41 million.

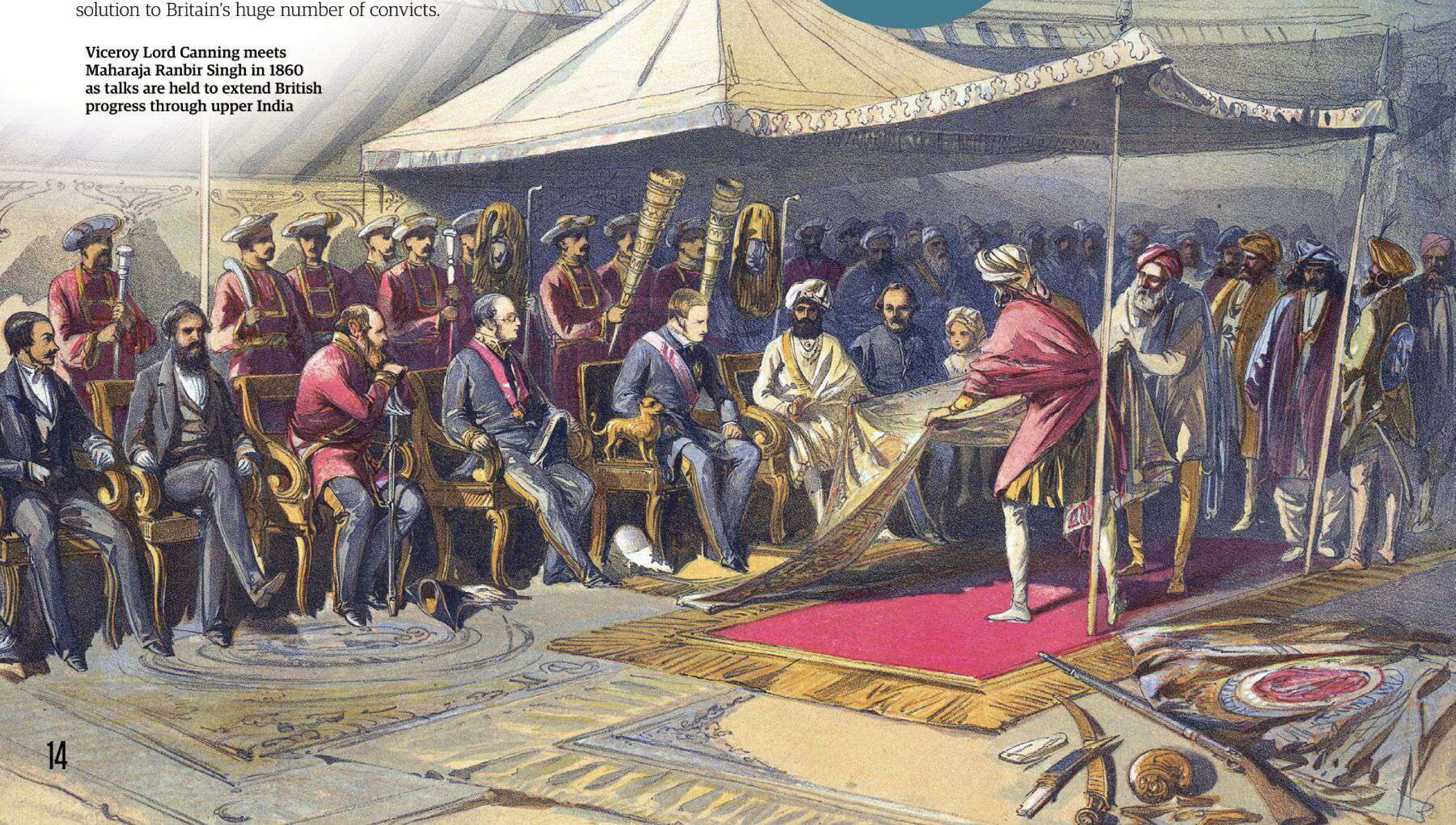
Seven assassination attempts were made on Victoria's life between 1840 and 1882

Raj

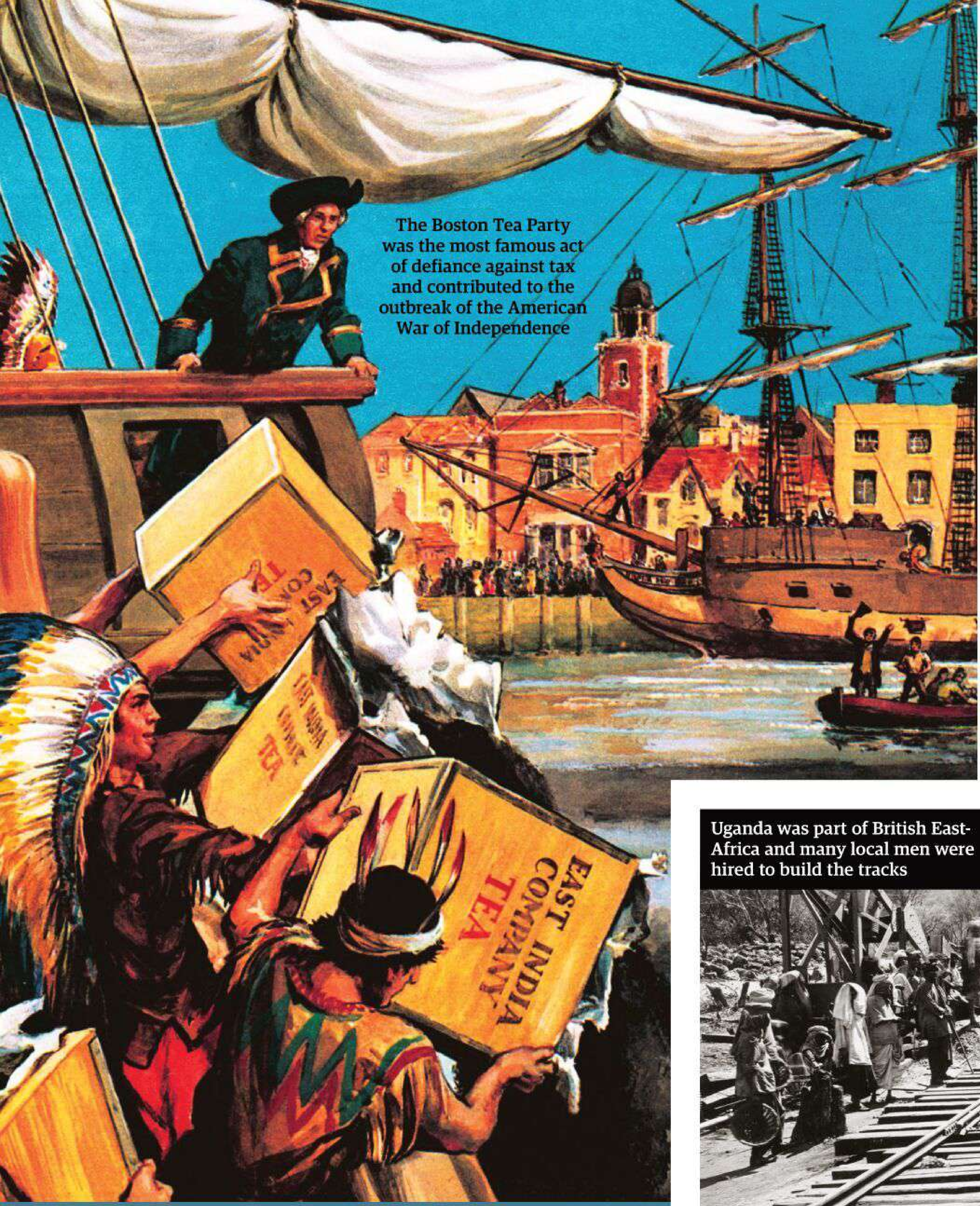
The successor to company rule, the Raj spelled a new era for India



In 1858, the faltering East India Company was relieved of its political duties after the Indian Rebellion and British India came into the hands of the British Crown. The Raj didn't cover the whole of India and instead ruled over approximately two-fifths of the subcontinent. A succession of British viceroys ruled India, as the area remained an economic and military asset to Britain. 20 per cent of Britain's exports went to India and many Indians were assumed into the British Army. 20,000 troops and officials ruled over 300 million Indians. Eventually the local population began to resent British rule, as it often left them poor and unfed with the Empire's profits and ambition put first. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885, giving the natives an intellectual and centralised voice. The organisation helped aid the rise of Gandhi in the early 20th century and get the nation on the road to independence, which was eventually achieved in 1947.



Viceroy Lord Canning meets Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1860 as talks are held to extend British progress through upper India


The Boston Tea Party was the most famous act of defiance against tax and contributed to the outbreak of the American War of Independence

Slavery

A shameful blot on the empire's legacy

S

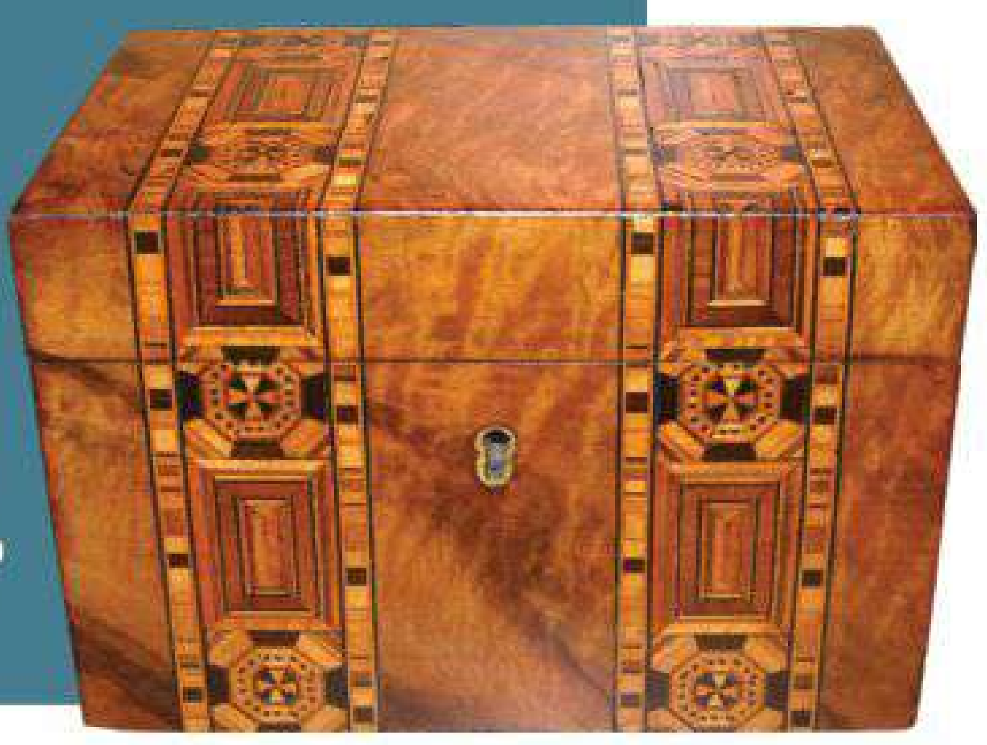
With the empire ever expanding, shortages of labour in British territories were common. To remedy this, Britain (along with many other European powers) decided upon a terrible solution: the slave trade. The first trip was undertaken by John Hawkins in 1562 and the transatlantic slave trade was born. A triangle between Europe, the Americas and Africa, millions of Africans were removed from their homes and forced to work on plantations in the New World. This free workforce greatly benefited the economies of the European powers. In 1807, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed, finally bringing an end to the vile practice, but it continued in some colonies until 1838. Up until the 20th century, a Royal Navy fleet known as the West Africa Squadron scoured Africa's coast, freeing slaves as attitudes were slow to change.

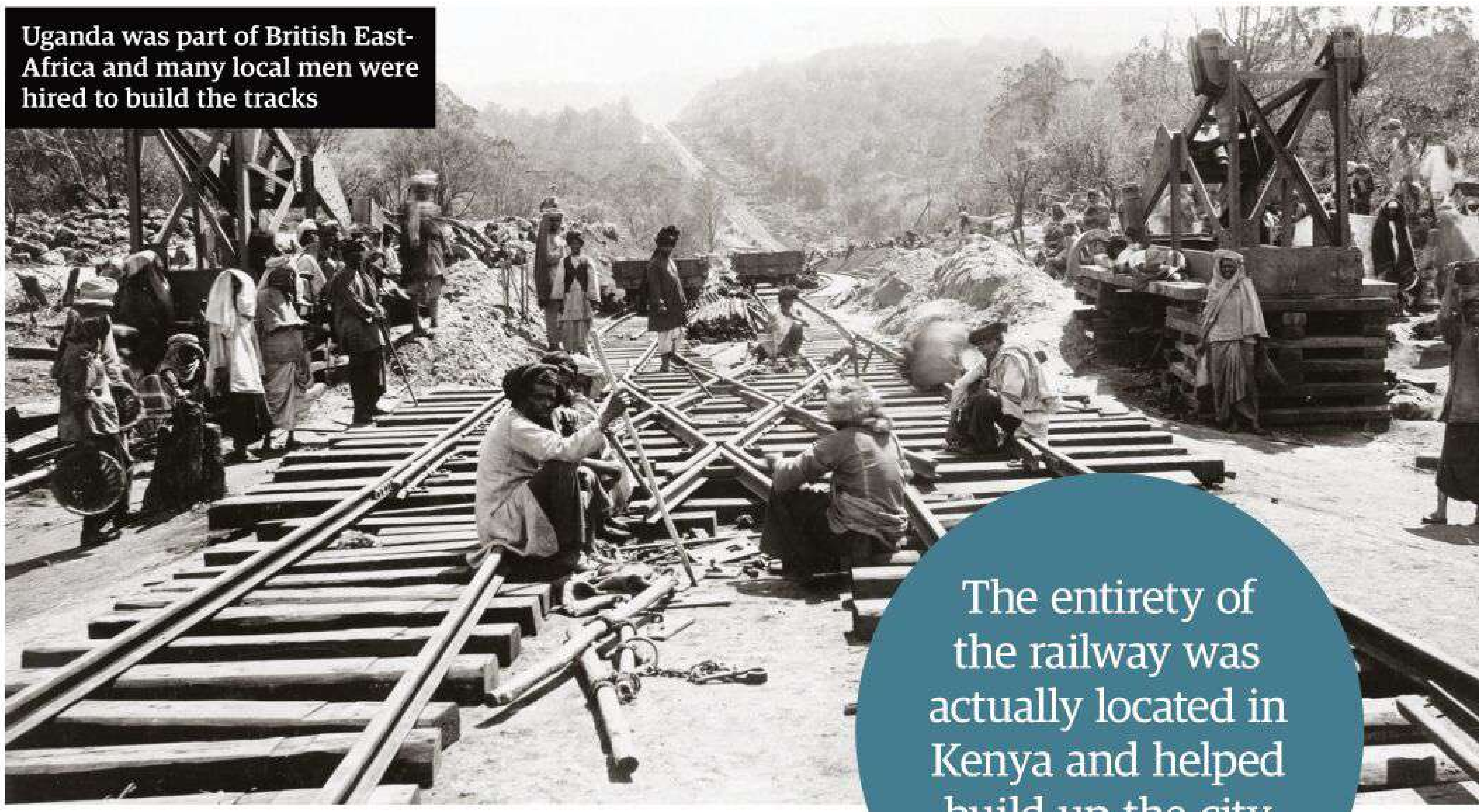
Tea

The drink that became a major commodity in the Empire

T

One of the finest results of Britain's expansion into Asia was the tea trade. Primarily a drink for the wealthy due to its high price, the first order was taken in 1664. Tea leaves soon became big business and the East India Company quickly stepped up tea production, especially in Assam, India. Hiring cheap tea-picking labourers, it became a profitable industry and a cultural phenomenon back in Britain, rivalling coffee for the nation's favourite drink. Each crossing from China or India to Britain would take months and taxation on tea was very high, which often resulted in tax avoidance through smuggling. After the demise of the East India Company, the tea trade became a free-for-all and merchants chartered fast ships known as clippers to get a piece of the action. Since it was first traded, it has undoubtedly become the drink of Britain and the Empire.


Right: Tea bags weren't invented yet, so the precious tea leaves were transported back to Britain in wooden chests known as caddies


Uganda was part of British East-Africa and many local men were hired to build the tracks

Uganda Railway

The 'Lunatic Express' that blazed a trail through both Uganda and Kenya

U

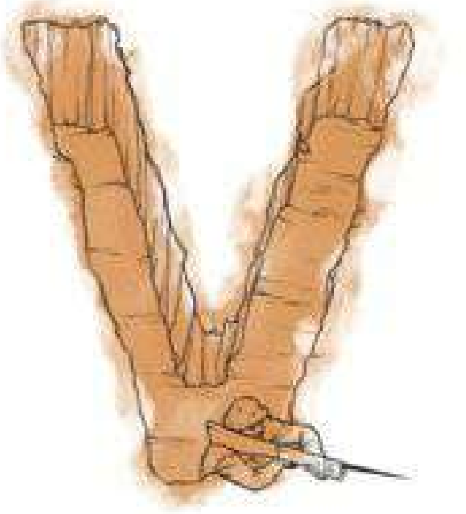
1,062 kilometres of track, the Ugandan railway began its life on 30 May 1896 when the first plate was laid. The first train would leave Mombasa station two years later. The track was the brainchild of George Whitehouse, a veteran of railway construction in England, South Africa and India. Many of the first engines to hit the tracks were second-hand imports from India. 31,983 Indians were sent to Africa to construct the railroad, along with a few thousand East Africans. The conditions were harsh for the workers and they would sometimes go for days without water due to late or derailed water trains. The most dangerous part of the job, however, was the so-called 'man-eaters of Tsavo'. When the railway was being constructed over the Tsavo River, the workers were preyed upon by a number of lions that killed about 20 men.

There were many perils along the way, but the railway was finally completed in 1901. The Lunatic Express helped the British prevent German influence in the area and was an effective political move to control the Nile and access to the east-African coast. The railway wasn't popular with the natives and was known as the 'Iron Snake'. The Kedong Massacre of 1895 resulted in 500 deaths after a worker's caravan was attacked by the Maasai people who were incensed after two girls were allegedly raped. Parts of the track are open today and have been incorporated into the Kenya Railways Corporation.

> The entirety of the railway was actually located in Kenya and helped build up the city of Nairobi

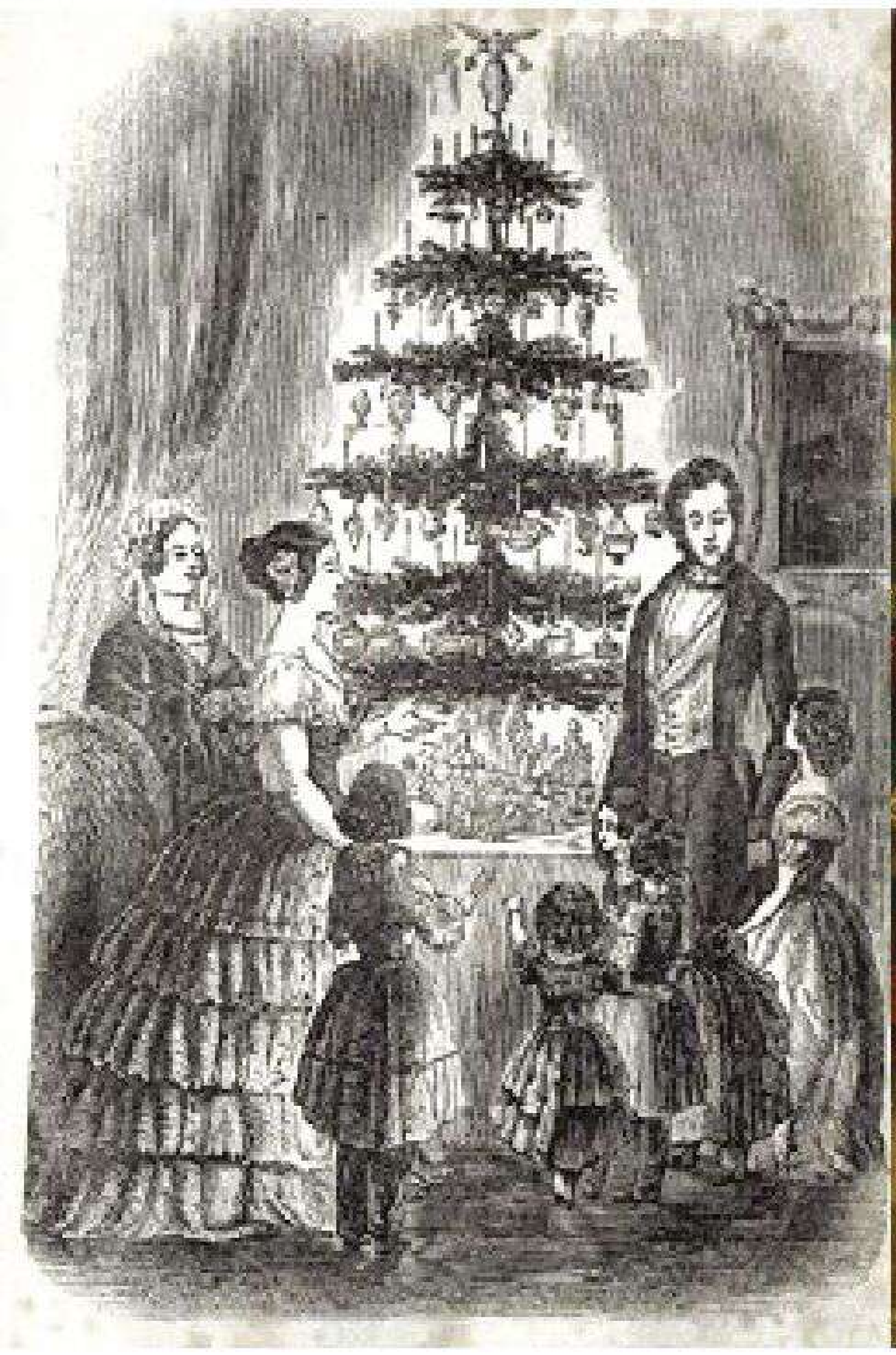
Vimy Ridge

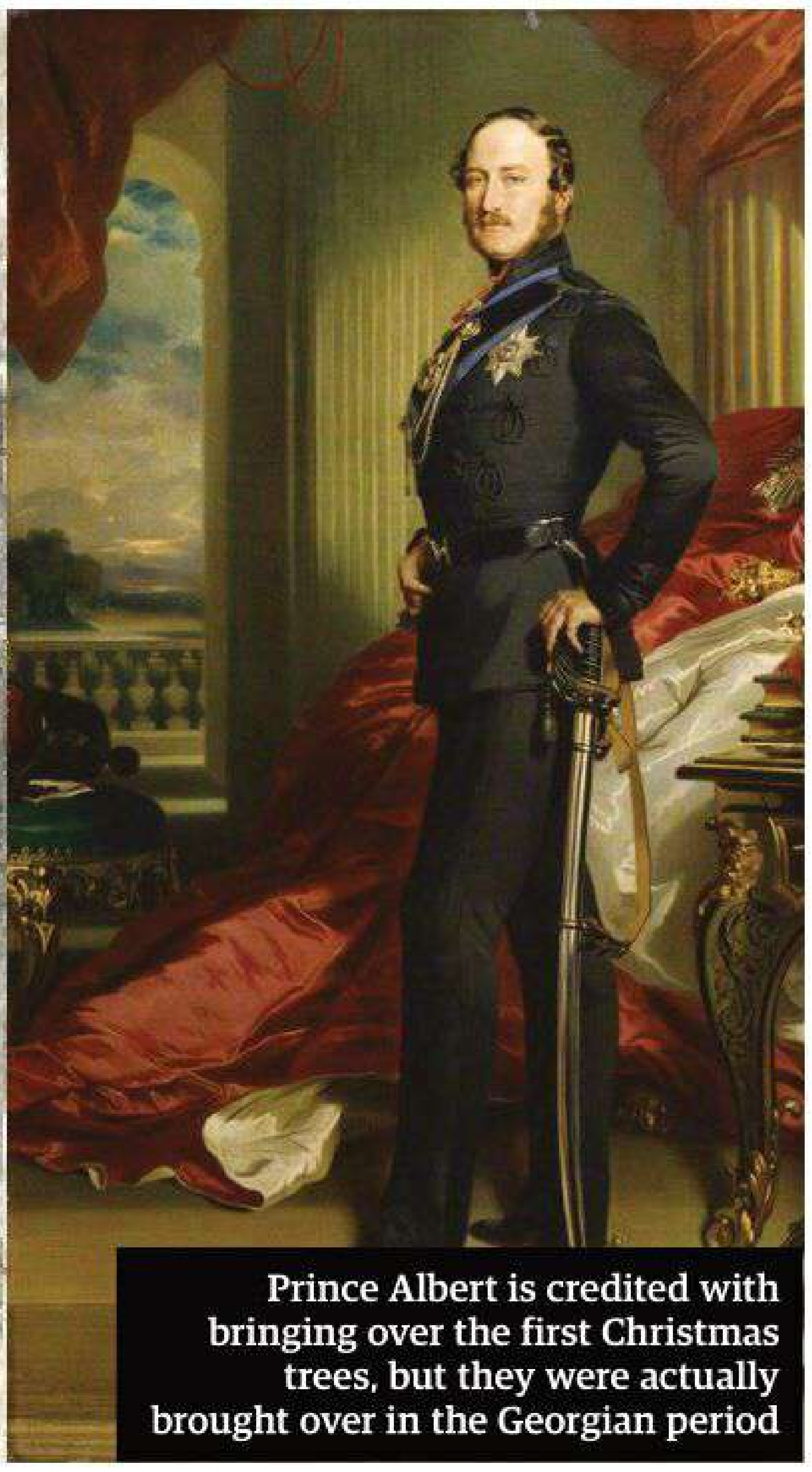
A defining moment for Canadian troops fighting on the side of the Empire in World War I



Vimy Ridge was the WWI battle in which the bravery and effectiveness of Canadian soldiers came to the fore. The troops were ordered to seize the heavily defended ridge, which had a commanding view over the British lines and was strategically important for the Central Powers. A French attack had already failed, so the assault was carefully prepared. The plan of attack was an artillery barrage that would keep the Germans pinned down while the Canadians charged through subterranean tunnels towards enemy lines. The battle began at 5.30am on 9 April with the thunder of 1,000 artillery pieces as 15,000 Canadian infantrymen stormed the German trenches while under heavy machine-gun fire. By the end of the day, 10,000 were killed or wounded, but Hill 145, the highest point of the ridge, was successfully captured by a bayonet charge on the final machine-gun nests. A monument now stands at this spot to commemorate the immense acts of courage and sacrifice.

The loss of life was high but the victory at Vimy Ridge was the single most successful advance by the Triple Entente up to that date

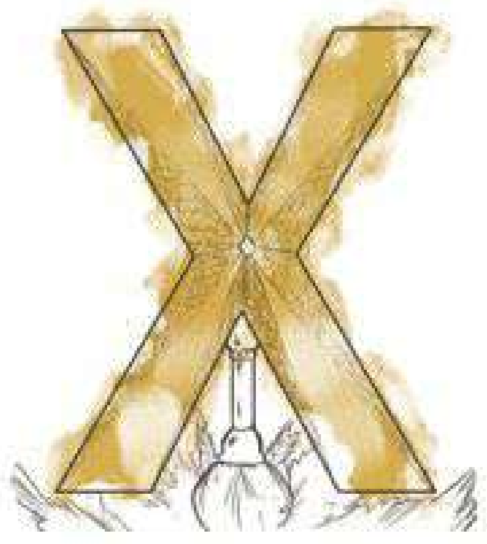




Prince Albert is credited with bringing over the first Christmas trees, but they were actually brought over in the Georgian period

Xmas tree

The invasion of evergreens into British households



They may be a staple of Christmas tradition now, but prior to the Victorian age, Christmas trees, as we know them today, were a rarity. The first trees were brought over to Britain in 1800 by George III's German wife Queen Charlotte, but they only achieved any sort of popularity in the 1840s thanks to Queen Victoria's German husband Prince Albert.

Their popularity only soared further when the royal family were pictured with their own tree and companies first got in on the act in 1880 when Woolworths began selling Christmas tree ornaments. Originally, the German Springelbaum was the tree of choice, but they began to be replaced by the Norwegian spruce as demand grew in the 1880s. By the end of the 19th century, Christmas in the British Empire had transformed from a barely recognised date to a national holiday.

Westminster system

How legislation and governance made its way from Britain to the outer reaches of the Empire

The loss of the USA resulted in a political rejig in the empire. The Durham Report, written in 1839, has been described as "the book that saved the empire" and put forward the idea of colonies governing themselves. Britain ruled a fifth of the world's population at its peak, and as time progressed, could not keep all the political institutions of its sprawling empire in check. A two-party system evolved in many of the British dominions with Canada allowed a responsible government in 1848 and Australia in 1855. The system benefited Britain as it reduced the pressure on its Parliament to make decisions for all the lands it governed but still gave it supreme rule over the colonies. It benefited the colonies as it gave them the ability to rule with a sense of independence and freedom.

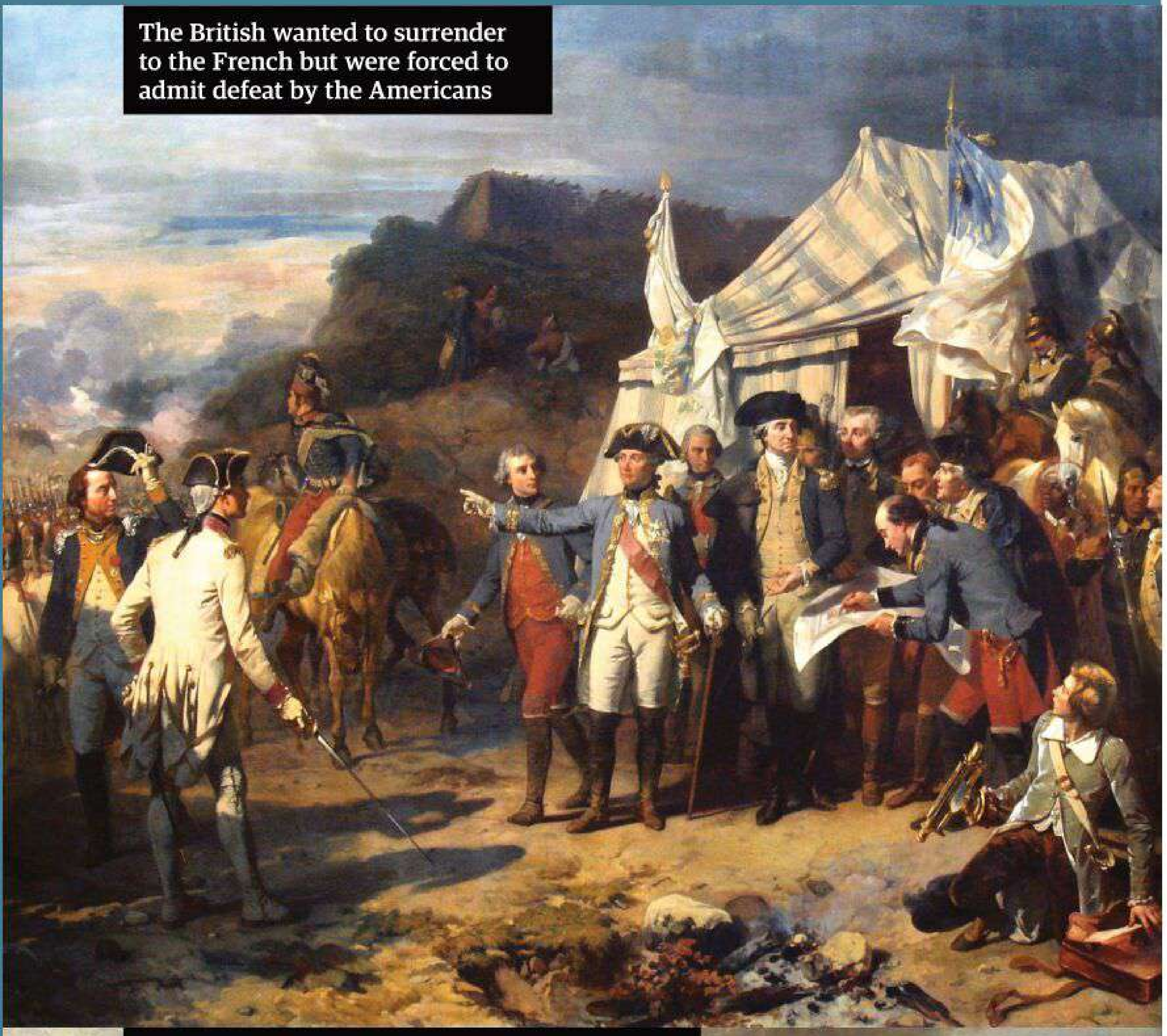
Most colonies took on what is known as the 'Westminster System'. For many of these countries today, the political system is a final remnant of British rule and, with some adaptation, has served their politics well. For example, India, despite huge rebellions and a successful drive for independence, still utilises the system. It has, however, become unpopular in some former colonies. Riots in the Solomon Islands in 2006 were motivated by the April 2006 election and many have criticised the Westminster system as it can fail to reflect who the electorate vote for with its first-past-the-post system.

The Westminster system helped maintain a Commonwealth even after decolonisation

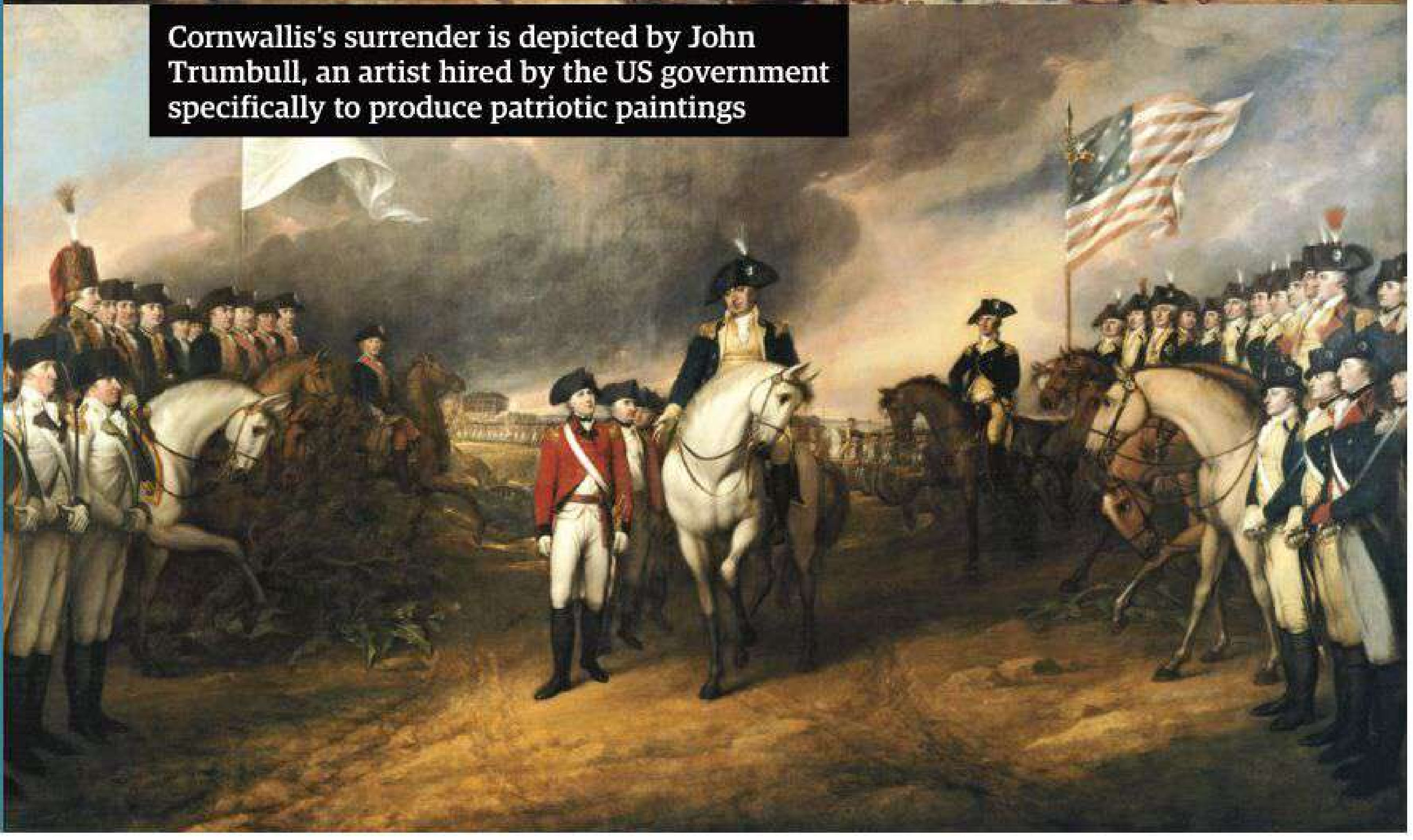
Yorktown

The important siege that brought an end to major hostilities in the American War of Independence

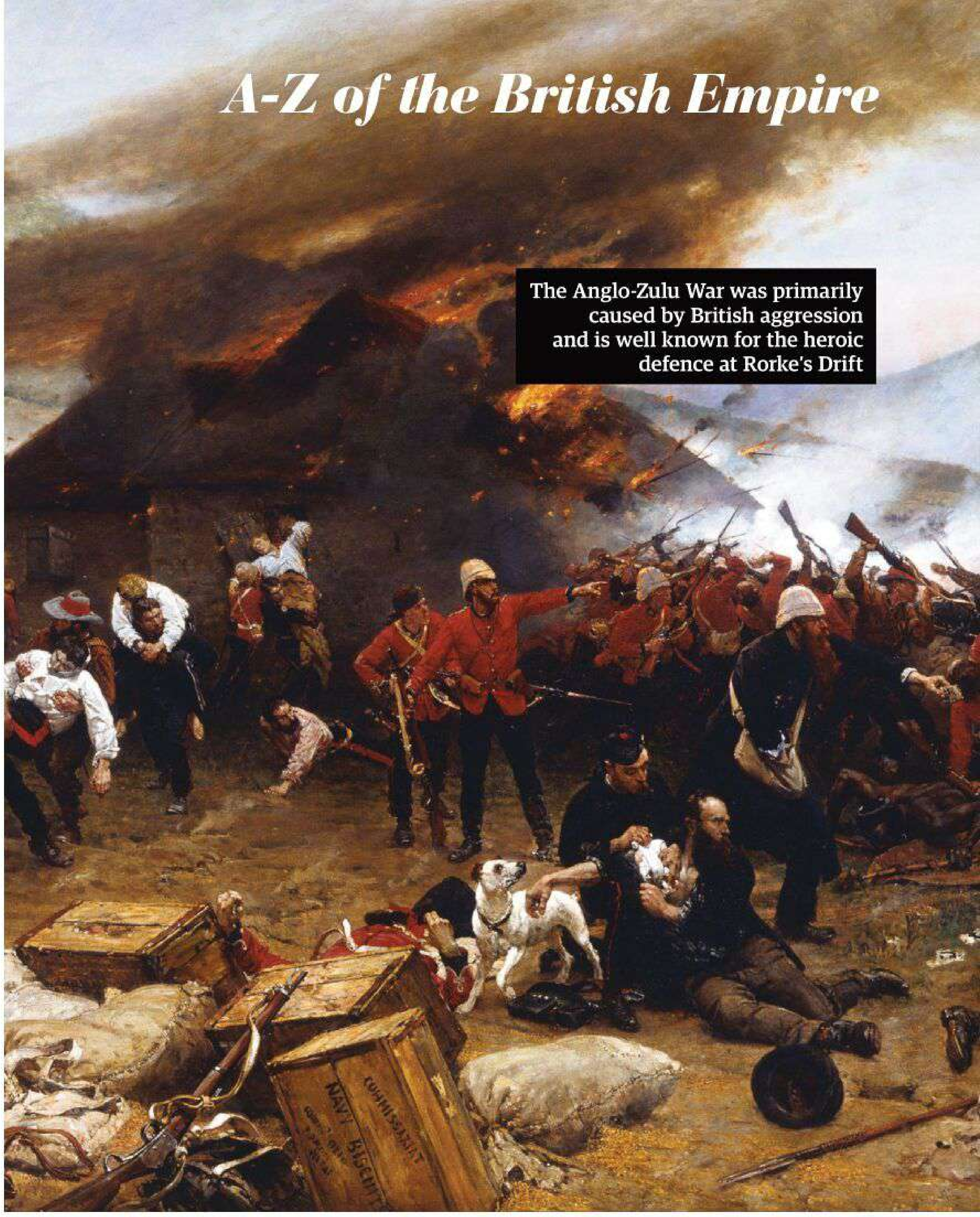
Perhaps one of the most pivotal battles in the history of the empire, Yorktown signified the end of the British grip on America. The British commander, Lord Cornwallis, had moved his troops to Yorktown, Virginia, in hope of maintaining communication with the main British army in New York. George Washington ordered French General Lafayette and an American and French coalition army to prevent Cornwallis's escape from Yorktown. A sea blockade was put in place and shortly after land troops advanced on the British positions. After the British lost naval superiority at the Battle of Virginia Capes, Cornwallis and his men were isolated. After 20 days, the situation was hopeless and Yorktown was surrendered with 8,000 British prisoners taken. The defeat itself wasn't a huge loss but it started to persuade the British government to consider peace.



The British wanted to surrender to the French but were forced to admit defeat by the Americans



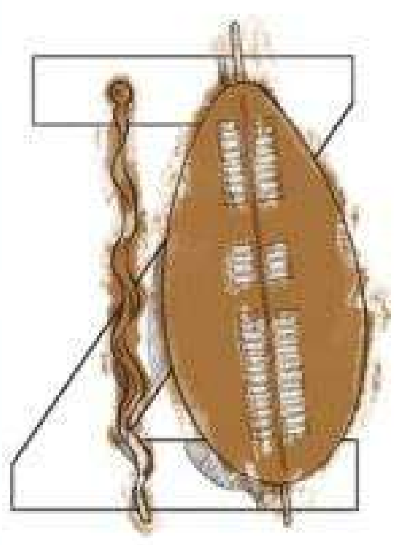
Cornwallis's surrender is depicted by John Trumbull, an artist hired by the US government specifically to produce patriotic paintings



The Anglo-Zulu War was primarily caused by British aggression and is well known for the heroic defence at Rorke's Drift

Zulus

Prior to the Boer War, the British found another great threat to their desire to rule southern Africa



In the early years of the 19th century, the Zulus were the major holders of power in southern Africa. However, with settlers arriving from overseas, it wasn't long before violence broke out between them and the new Boer and British colonists who had discovered gold and diamonds in Zulu lands. Back in London, the British government weren't keen on war, but high commissioner for South Africa, Bartle Frere, had other ideas; he issued an ultimatum to the Zulus. The harsh conditions imposed were not adhered to and predictably led to war.

The Anglo-Zulu War began in January 1879. The Zulus had a numerical advantage with King Cetawayo, boasting forces of 40,000. The first major conflict was at Isandlwana, where 806 British soldiers died in what became an emphatic victory for the Zulus. The same day, a small British encampment called Rorke's Drift was assaulted by huge numbers of Zulus, but the garrison of just 145 men remarkably held out.

As the war progressed, the tide turned against the Zulus, who were no match for British tactics and firepower. A telling example of this came at Kambula in March 1879, when around 2,000 Zulus perished while the British only lost 18 men. This defeat broke the Zulu nation and effectively handed their lands over to the British.

British imperialism had conquered South Africa and the area would become an important part of the empire until war broke out again 1880, this time against the Boers.

> The disastrous and embarrassing loss at Isandlwana was covered up; many of the Victorian public never heard the true story

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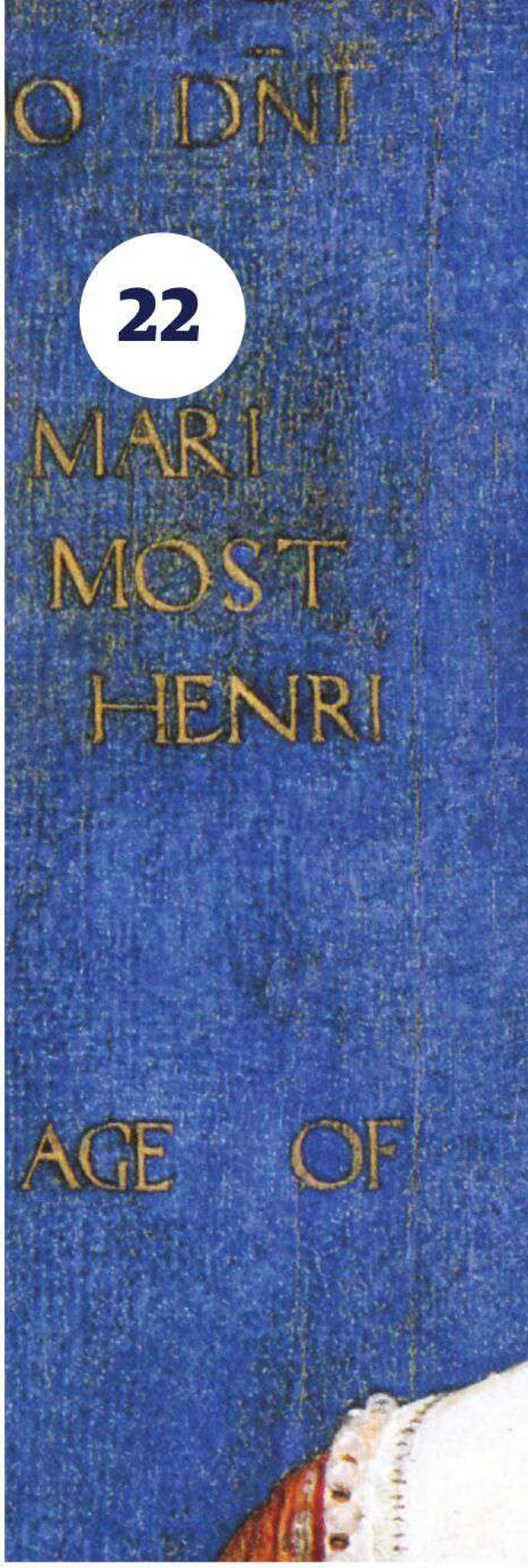
ORIGINS OF EMPIRE

Explore the events that planted the seed for Britain's quest for dominance and supremacy



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Take a look at the early gains that foretold the emergence and evolution of the British Empire

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Meet the 16th-century aristocrat who paved the way for English settlements in the New World

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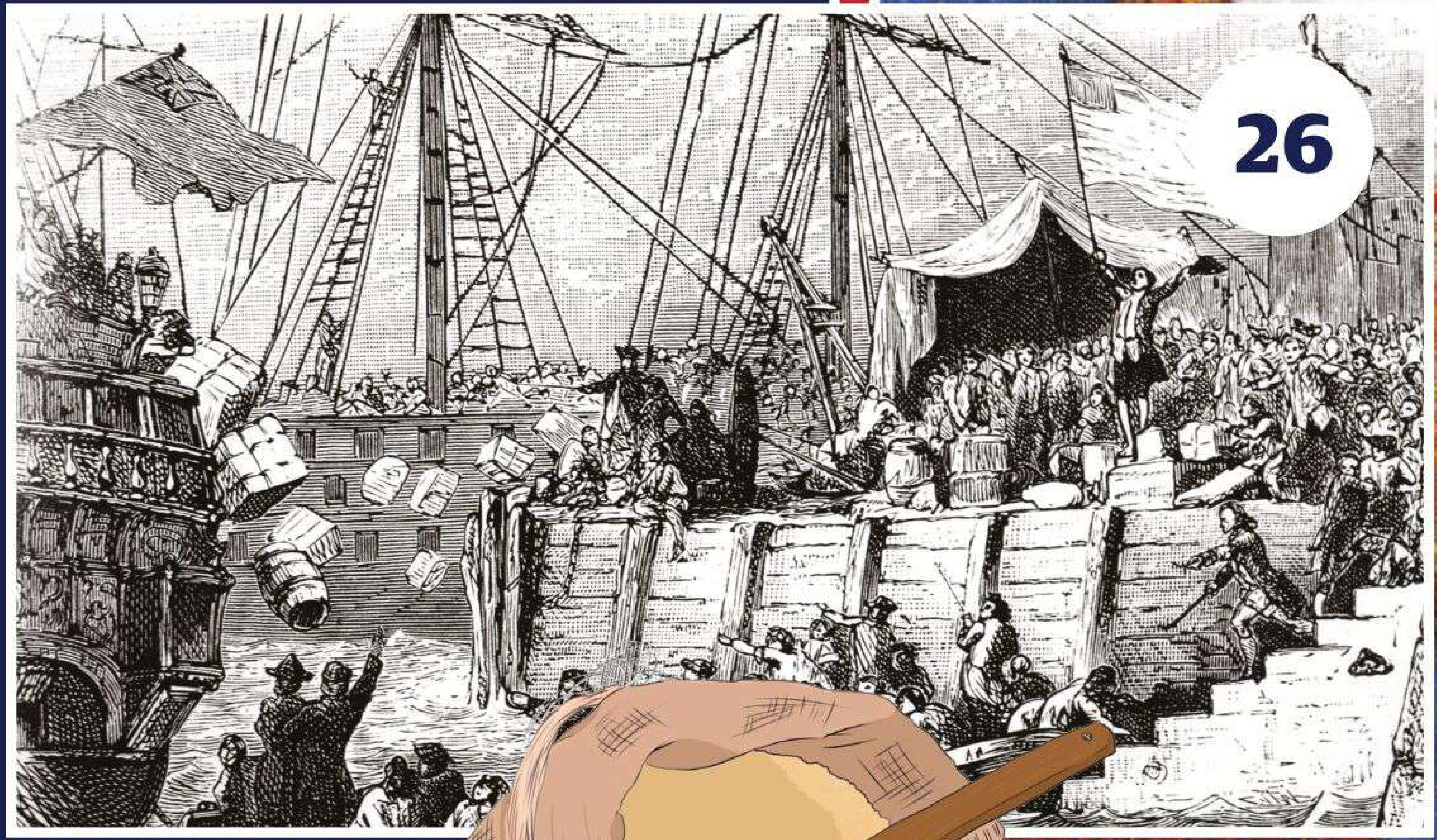
Plot the events that caused a perfect storm for the Crown's ultimate assumption of power

36 East India Company: India's corporate overlord
Learn how this private commercial agent exploited foreign colonies for their native goods

40 Ten trading treasures
Discover the most valuable goods transported and exchanged in the new global trade network



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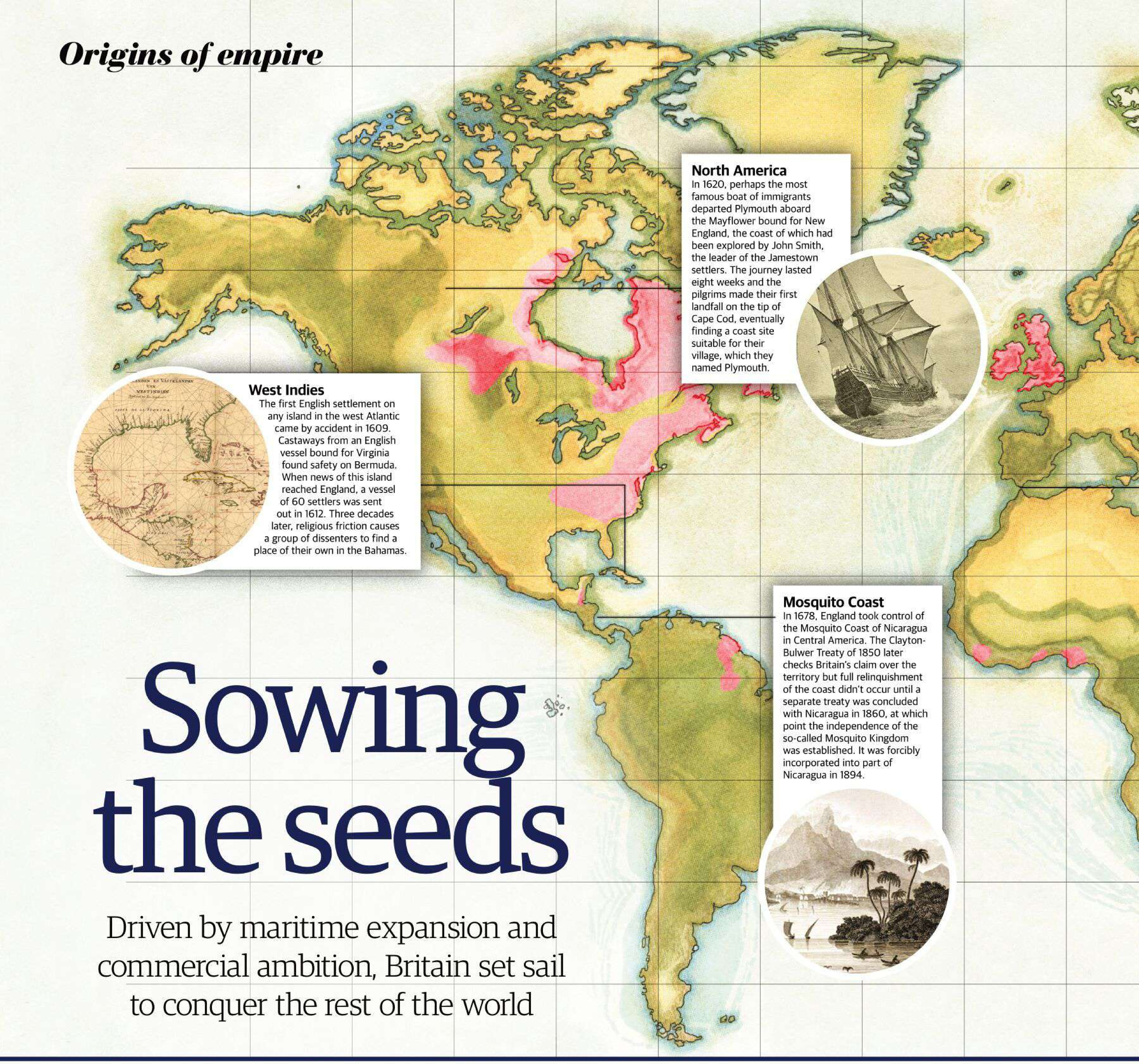


North America
In 1620, perhaps the most famous boat of immigrants departed Plymouth aboard the Mayflower bound for New England, the coast of which had been explored by John Smith, the leader of the Jamestown settlers. The journey lasted eight weeks and the pilgrims made their first landfall on the tip of Cape Cod, eventually finding a coast site suitable for their village, which they named Plymouth.

West Indies
The first English settlement on any island in the west Atlantic came by accident in 1609. Castaways from an English vessel bound for Virginia found safety on Bermuda. When news of this island reached England, a vessel of 60 settlers was sent out in 1612. Three decades later, religious friction causes a group of dissenters to find a place of their own in the Bahamas.

Mosquito Coast
In 1678, England took control of the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua in Central America. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850 later checks Britain's claim over the territory but full relinquishment of the coast didn't occur until a separate treaty was concluded with Nicaragua in 1860, at which point the independence of the so-called Mosquito Kingdom was established. It was forcibly incorporated into part of Nicaragua in 1894.

Sowing the seeds

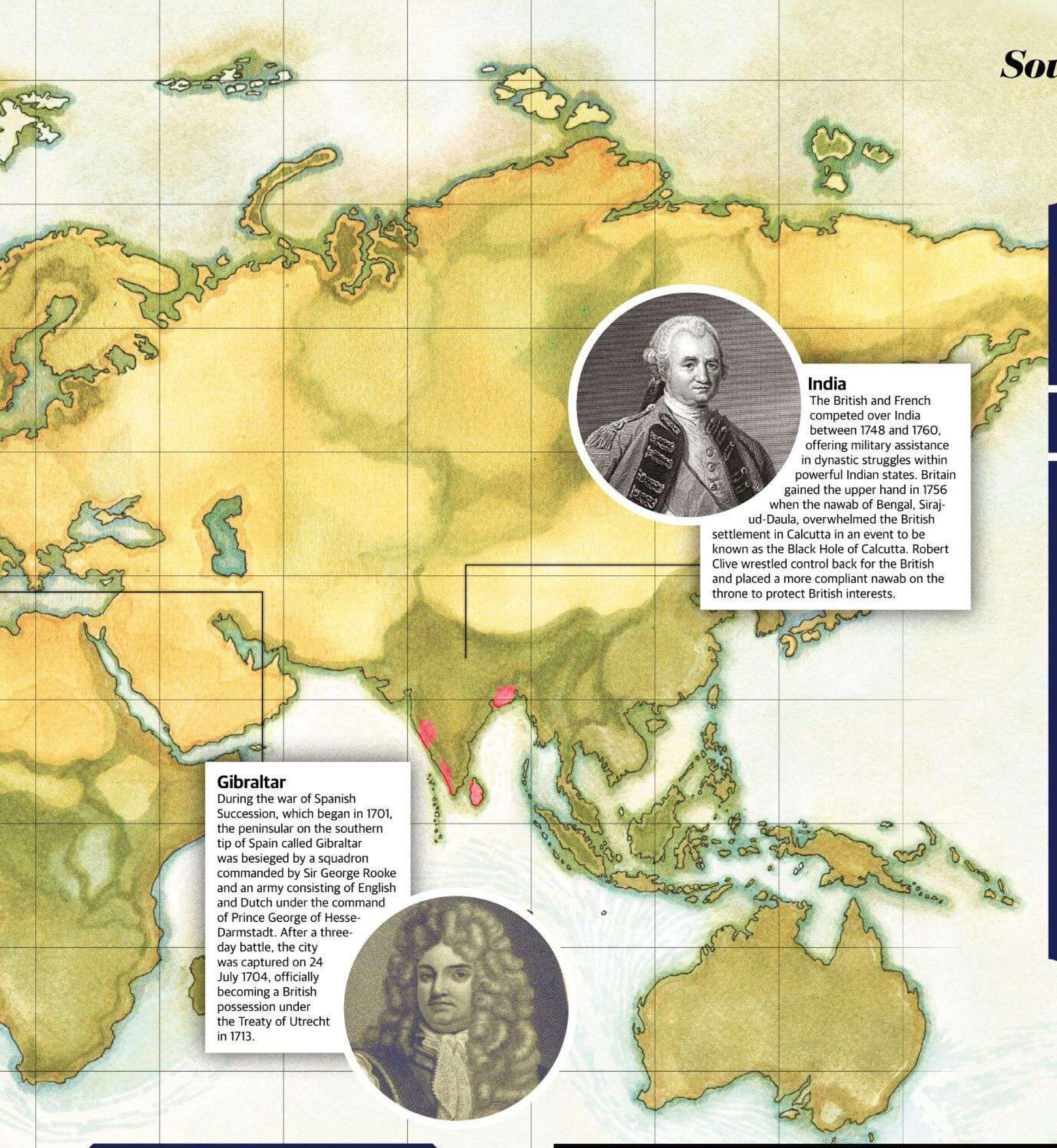
Driven by maritime expansion and commercial ambition, Britain set sail to conquer the rest of the world

The origins of the British Empire can be traced back to the reign of Henry VII at the end of the 15th century and sparked by the spice trade of the Orient. Spices were worth their weight in gold thanks to the way they enhanced the flavour and extended the shelf life of foodstuffs. There was therefore great competition between Britain and the Spanish and Portuguese to secure a route to the Orient through the frozen North of the New World. Commissioned by Henry VII, John Cabot set sail in 1497.

Although lacking the necessary maritime skills to complete the expedition, British ships did find plenty of good fishing grounds off the coast of Newfoundland, which would later draw various English fishermen across the Atlantic – and thus develop the maritime expertise that would prove vital to the success of Elizabethan explorers, such as Raleigh and Drake.

In the following century, Henry VIII was more concerned with European affairs than exploring distant coastlines, although his decision to invest heavily in the Navy did lay the groundwork for future exploits. With Portugal and Spain leading the way in exploration and reaping untold wealth as a result, Henry VIII granted permission for Sir Hugh Willoughby to find a North East passage through the Arctic Ocean and for John Rut to continue the hunt for a North West passage to the Orient. Although these expeditions proved fruitless, he did have success in securing Ireland, becoming the first Englishman to be seen as King of Ireland. It wasn't until the reign of Edward VI that the concept of planting settlers in Ireland was mooted, which would later be used as the model for English settlements in the New World and Caribbean. A premature death at the age of just 15 saw Edward's imperial ambitions go unrealised.

Seeing the riches of the Orient and the New World pour into Portugal and Spain spurred Britain on during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. When John Hawkins attempted to break the Iberian



India
The British and French competed over India between 1748 and 1760, offering military assistance in dynastic struggles within powerful Indian states. Britain gained the upper hand in 1756 when the nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, overwhelmed the British settlement in Calcutta in an event to be known as the Black Hole of Calcutta. Robert Clive wrestled control back for the British and placed a more compliant nawab on the throne to protect British interests.

Gibraltar
During the war of Spanish Succession, which began in 1701, the peninsular on the southern tip of Spain called Gibraltar was besieged by a squadron commanded by Sir George Rooke and an army consisting of English and Dutch under the command of Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt. After a three-day battle, the city was captured on 24 July 1704, officially becoming a British possession under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

Key

🟧 *Territories of the British Empire in 1750*

Voyages of discovery

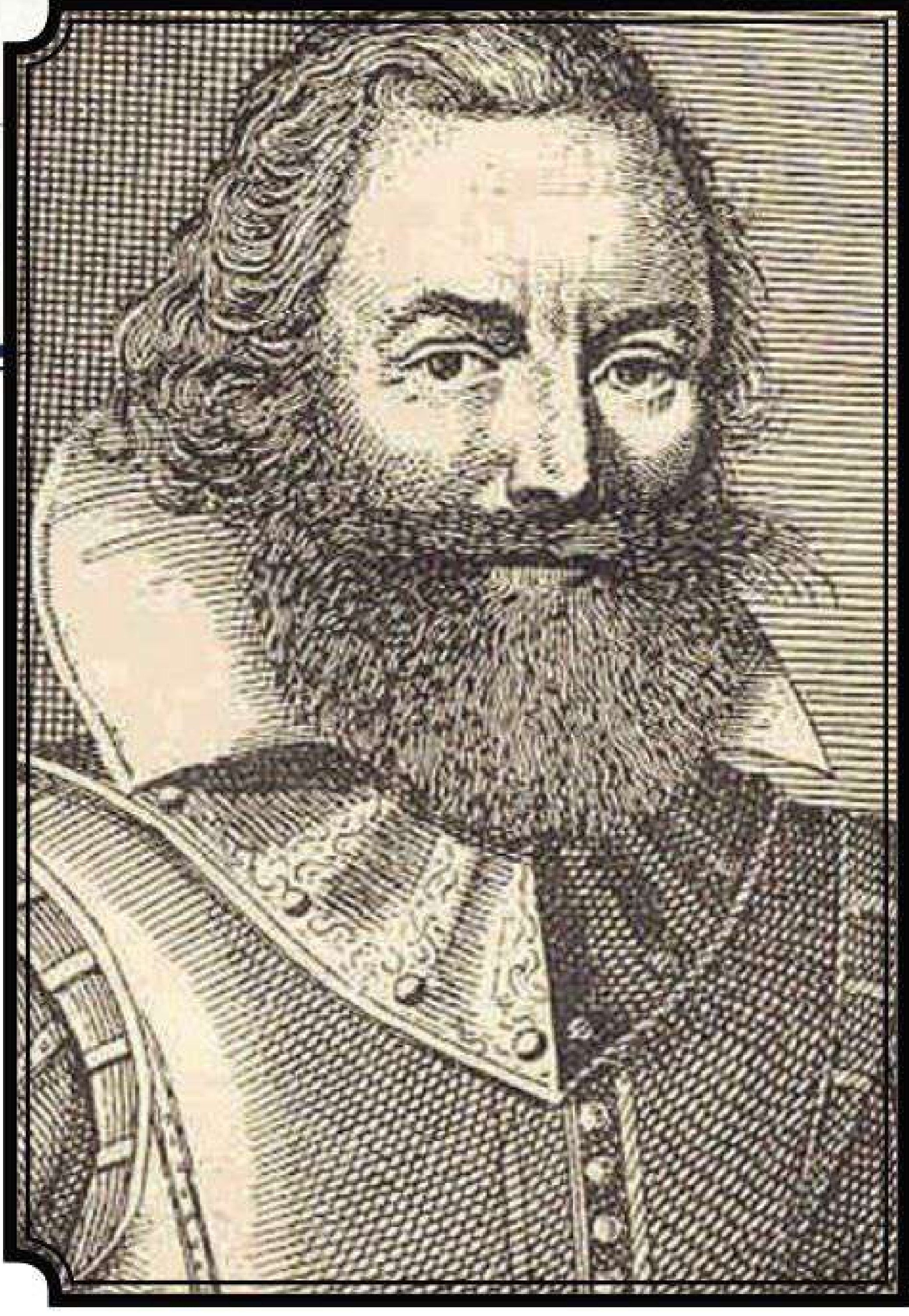
When Britain started to flex its maritime muscles

TERRITORY GAINED OR LOST? + −

1609	+	BERMUDA
1618	+	GAMBIA
1618	+	GOLD COAST OF AFRICA
1620	+	NORTH AMERICA
1623	+	ST KITTS
1627	+	BARBADOS
1636	+	ANTIGUA
1648	+	BAHAMAS
1655	+	JAMAICA
1670	+	CANADA
1673	+	ST HELENA
1678	+	MOSQUITO COAST OF NICARAGUA
1704	+	GIBRALTAR

monopoly of trade between Africa and the New World in a series of expeditions that took slaves from Portuguese Africa to the Spanish colonies in the New World, he and his cousin, Francis Drake, were attacked at San Juan de Ulua in 1568. This changed England's attitudes to Spain, and piracy became an accepted means of forcibly intercepting Spanish spoils rather than discovering its own sources of wealth.

It was not until the 17th century that Britain would really start acquiring its own colonies abroad – and nearly all of the early settlements came out of the enterprise of particular companies rather than the concerted effort of the British Crown.



Influential figure
John Smith

c. 1580-1631

In 1606, King James I supported efforts to establish colonies along the eastern coast of America, handing the task to merchants of The London Company. Three ships were sent by the company, eventually settling in Jamestown (later to be renamed Virginia in 1607). More than 100 English attempted to settle in Jamestown, but within a year disease, hunger and attacks by Native Americans reduced numbers to fewer than 40. Out of these circumstances came the first notable leader in British colonial history: John Smith. Appointed by The London Company to serve on the colony's council, Smith's energy, resourcefulness and skill in negotiating with locals soon saw him become leader of the community. Smith is famously associated with the story of Pocahontas, the 13-year-old daughter of a tribal chieftain. Smith claimed that, when captured and about to be executed by Native Americans, Pocahontas threw herself between him and his executioner.

Sir Walter Raleigh

Mapping the globe

England may have had the biggest empire in the world, but it was down to explorers like Raleigh that it kept on growing

There are few British explorers whose names have endured the test of time, yet Sir Walter Raleigh's notoriety certainly hasn't been dampened by the near four centuries that have passed since his death. Raleigh's contribution to the British Empire was significant: not only was he an able explorer, he was a seaman, a courtier, a philosopher, and a writer. His dreams for the empire were limitless, and his desire to put his dreams into practice could not be stifled.

A pioneer of the early British colonisation of America, Raleigh saw his fair share of success as well as failure. His blinding hatred of Roman Catholicism could never be quelled, which caused him plenty of trouble throughout his life, while his popularity with Queen Elizabeth I meant he had plenty of jealous enemies. His life was tumultuous to say the least, but how exactly did he earn his reputation as one of Britain's best explorers?

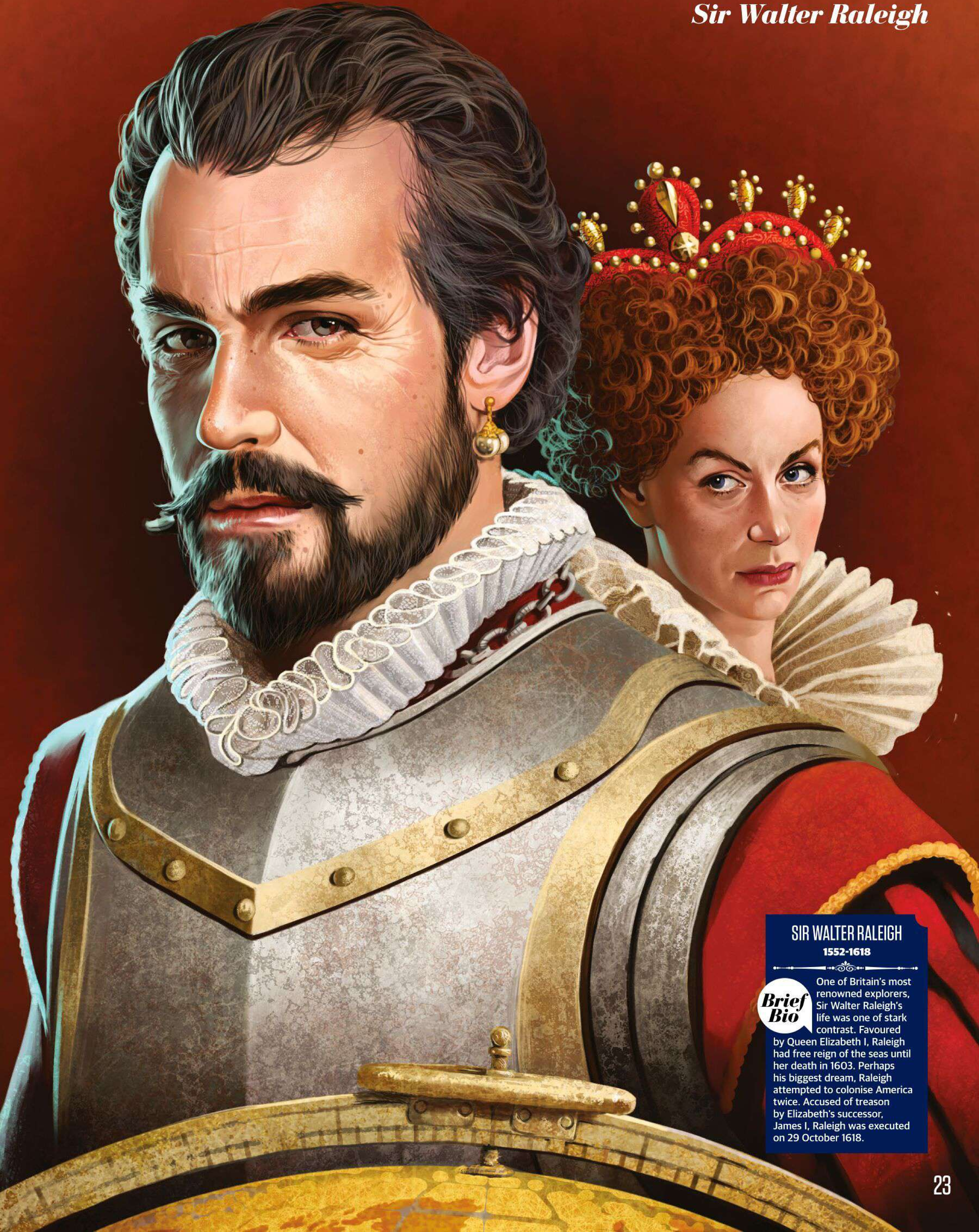
Raleigh is credited with making the potato popular in England after introducing them to Ireland in 1589

Born in either 1552 or 1554 to a well-connected family in Devon, Raleigh certainly didn't have it easy to begin with. Raised a devout Protestant, his youth was defined by fear of persecution at the hands of the Catholic monarch, Queen Mary I – who came to be known as Bloody Mary. It was this persecution that haunted Raleigh for the rest of his life. Thankfully for the Raleigh family, Mary I died in 1558, and her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth I, ascended the throne.

At the age of 17, Raleigh's disgust for Roman Catholicism was allowed an outlet: the Wars of Religion, fought in France. Raleigh rushed to fight with the Huguenots (French Protestants) in 1569. Not long after his return, he became a student at Oxford University, where his passion for writing was kindled. In particular, he showed a passion for poetry, but later in his life this developed further into prose writing.

After only a year at Oxford University, however, Raleigh left with the intention of setting sail on a voyage with his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Together, they intended to find the North West Passage near North America. The voyage turned out unsuccessful, and it sparked a spat with the Spanish over their shipping. Unimpressed upon their return, the Privy Council – advisers to the monarch – condemned them to a period of imprisonment. Raleigh was released soon enough, and he headed to Ireland, suppressing rebels in Munster. Here, having seized and redistributed the land from rebels, Raleigh found himself with about 40,000 acres of land, making him one of the largest landowners in the area.

His work in Ireland arguably defined the rest of Raleigh's life. Having suppressed rebellions, Raleigh came to the attention of Queen Elizabeth I in 1580. Impressed with his accomplishments in Ireland, Raleigh soon won over the queen with his charms and wit, and for most of their close friendship, he remained a firm favourite at the Royal Court.

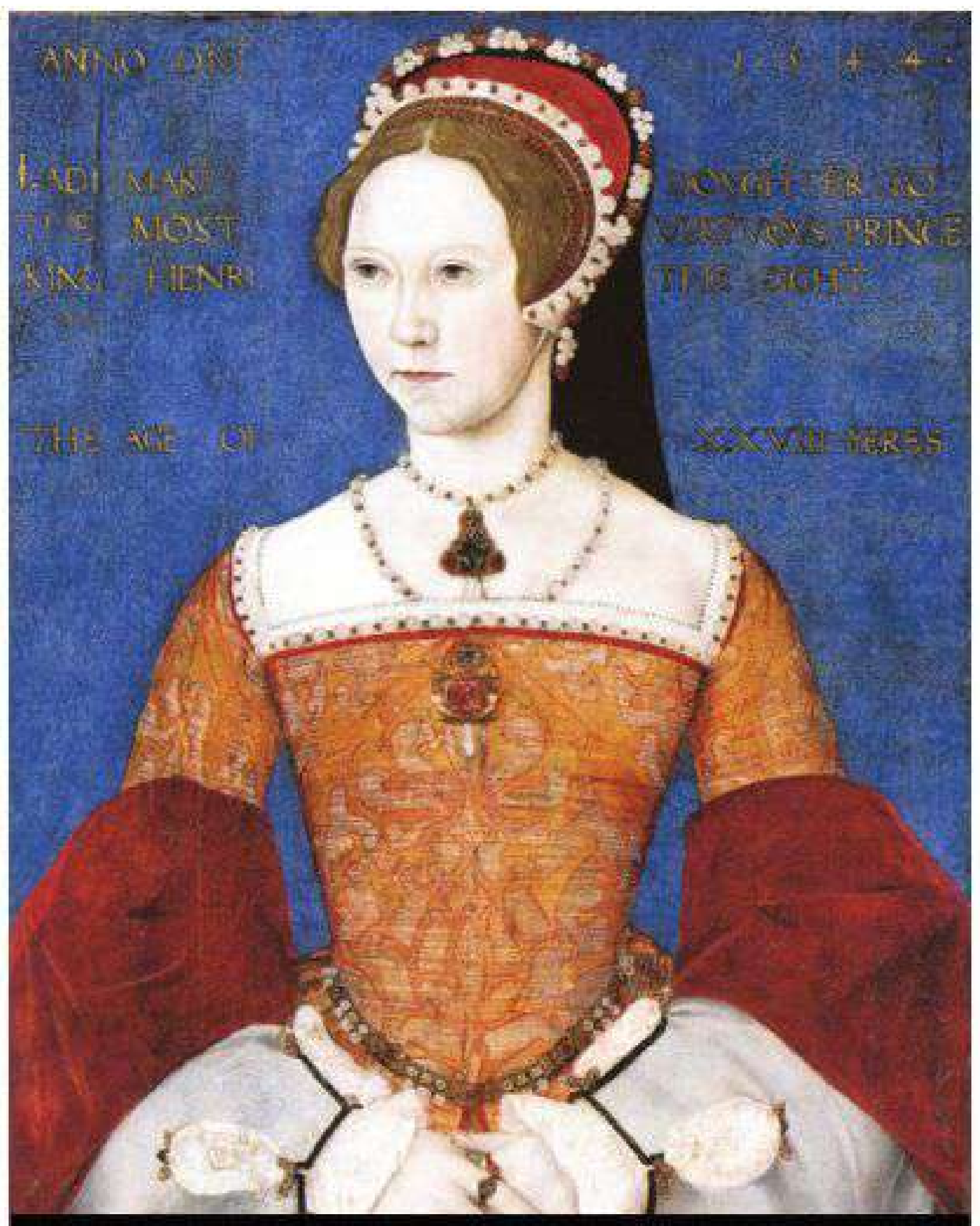


SIR WALTER RALEIGH

1552-1618

Brief Bio

One of Britain's most renowned explorers, Sir Walter Raleigh's life was one of stark contrast. Favoured by Queen Elizabeth I, Raleigh had free reign of the seas until her death in 1603. Perhaps his biggest dream, Raleigh attempted to colonise America twice. Accused of treason by Elizabeth's successor, James I, Raleigh was executed on 29 October 1618.



Unlike her father, dissenter Henry VIII, Mary I was a devout Catholic who reversed many of the Protestant laws when she ascended to the throne

Religious turmoil

The 16th century is defined by religious upheaval, and there wasn't a single person in Britain that didn't suffer at some point – Sir Walter Raleigh himself was no exception.

Henry VIII's reign saw the Protestant Reformation take hold in Britain, with many of Britain's inhabitants converting to the Church of England. Upon Henry VIII's death in 1547, his nine-year-old son, Edward VI, ascended the throne. While this pre-teen reigned, many Protestant laws were put in place, marking the final nail in the coffin of Catholicism in Britain – or so it seemed.

Plagued with illnesses, Edward VI died at the age of 15. In an attempt to ensure that the monarch remained a Protestant, Lady Jane Grey was named as his successor. One of the most well-read women in the country, Grey was Edward's cousin and a committed Protestant. However, after less than two weeks, Mary I was granted the throne, while Grey was executed for treason.

Born and raised to a devout Protestant family, Sir Walter Raleigh's early life was one of fear and persecution. His fear of Catholicism as a child grew into hatred when he was older, and by 1569, Raleigh was ready to go off to fight with the Huguenots in France against the Spanish Catholics.

> "His closeness to Queen Elizabeth I sparked jealousy among many of her other companions"

Despite his popularity with the monarch, Raleigh was considered outspoken, proud and extravagant to many other courtiers, and his closeness to Queen Elizabeth I sparked jealousy among many of her other companions.

However, Raleigh's friendship with the queen turned out to be very advantageous, and he was granted land, properties and positions throughout their friendship. Knighted in 1585, he was also made captain of the Queen's Guard in 1587 – an enviable position that served to consolidate his firm position at the queen's right-hand side.

His friendship with the queen gave him some personal limitations, however. Between 1585 and 1588, Raleigh has the opportunity to realise his lifelong dream to colonise North America. But his hopes were dashed when Queen Elizabeth I forbade him to set sail himself. Instead, Raleigh sent expeditions to set up camp there. A second voyage, however, confirmed that the attempt had been unsuccessful, as the entire colony had gone missing!

His relationship with the queen resulted in plenty of controversy, but no historical evidence suggests that there was anything between them, except flattery and admiration for one another. Having said which, it was his secret marriage to Bessy, daughter of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, that was to bring about Raleigh's fall from grace. As one of the queen's maids of honour, Bessy was discouraged – by the queen herself – from forming attachments with others in the royal Court, yet despite the monarch's demands to the contrary, Bessy and Raleigh wed.

Queen Elizabeth I discovered the marriage upon the birth of a child in 1592, and in a fit of jealous rage she ensured that both Raleigh and his wife were thrown in the Tower of London. In the end it was thanks to his relationship with the queen that Raleigh ensured that he wouldn't remain in the Tower for long. He knew what the queen wanted from her empire, and he promised to sail the seas in an attempt to find the legendary land of gold, El Dorado. In 1594, Raleigh set sail towards South

> The first English colony in the world, Raleigh named an American colony 'Virginia' after the 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth I

Defining moment

Favoured by a queen 1580

Having attracted the attentions of Queen Elizabeth I in 1580 with his action to suppress an uprising in Munster, Ireland, Raleigh quickly rises in her estimations, eventually becoming one of her favoured companions. This favouritism suits Raleigh nicely; the queen indulges him with plenty of property and positions, and in 1585 he is given a knighthood. By 1587, he is appointed captain of the Queen's Guard, and he is even allowed to enter Parliament.

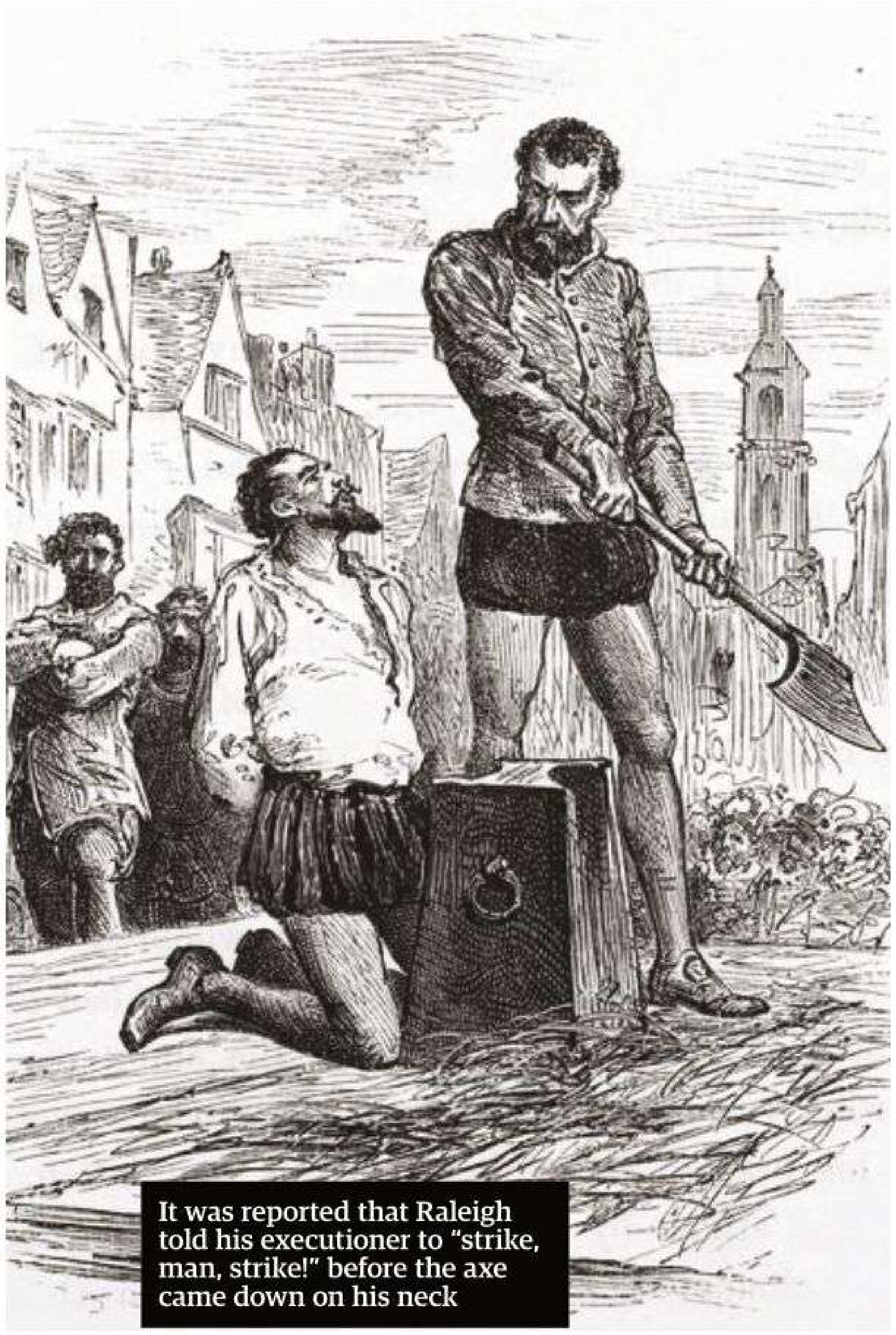
After being released from the Tower of London in 1616, King James I issued a royal pardon for Raleigh. This was later revoked in 1618, and Raleigh was executed

Timeline

1552

- **Raleigh is born** Historians can't be sure, but Raleigh is born in either 1552 or 1554 in Devon. Raised a Protestant under the reign of a Catholic Mary I, the Raleigh family is persecuted terribly. **1552/54**
- **Goes to university** With Protestant Queen Elizabeth I on the throne since 1558, Raleigh is free to study without the fear of punishment. Raleigh studies law at Oxford University, but leaves after only a year. **1572**
- **His first voyage** Fulfilling his dreams, Raleigh sets off on a voyage with his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. The journey fails, and the men return to Britain not long after. **1578**

- **Attempts to colonise America** Refused leave from the queen's side, Raleigh sends expeditions to attempt to colonise America. One is formed near Roanoke, but the second voyage finds the colony gone. **1585-88**
- **A marriage in secret** Raleigh's secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of Elizabeth I's maids of honour, is discovered by the queen in 1592 after a child is born. Both are imprisoned in the Tower of London. **1592**
- **The search for gold** In an attempt to reignite the queen's favour, Raleigh sets off for the fabled land of gold, El Dorado. He doesn't find it, but his capture of Cadiz ensures the seal of approval for Raleigh. **1594**


It was reported that Raleigh told his executioner to "strike, man, strike!" before the axe came down on his neck

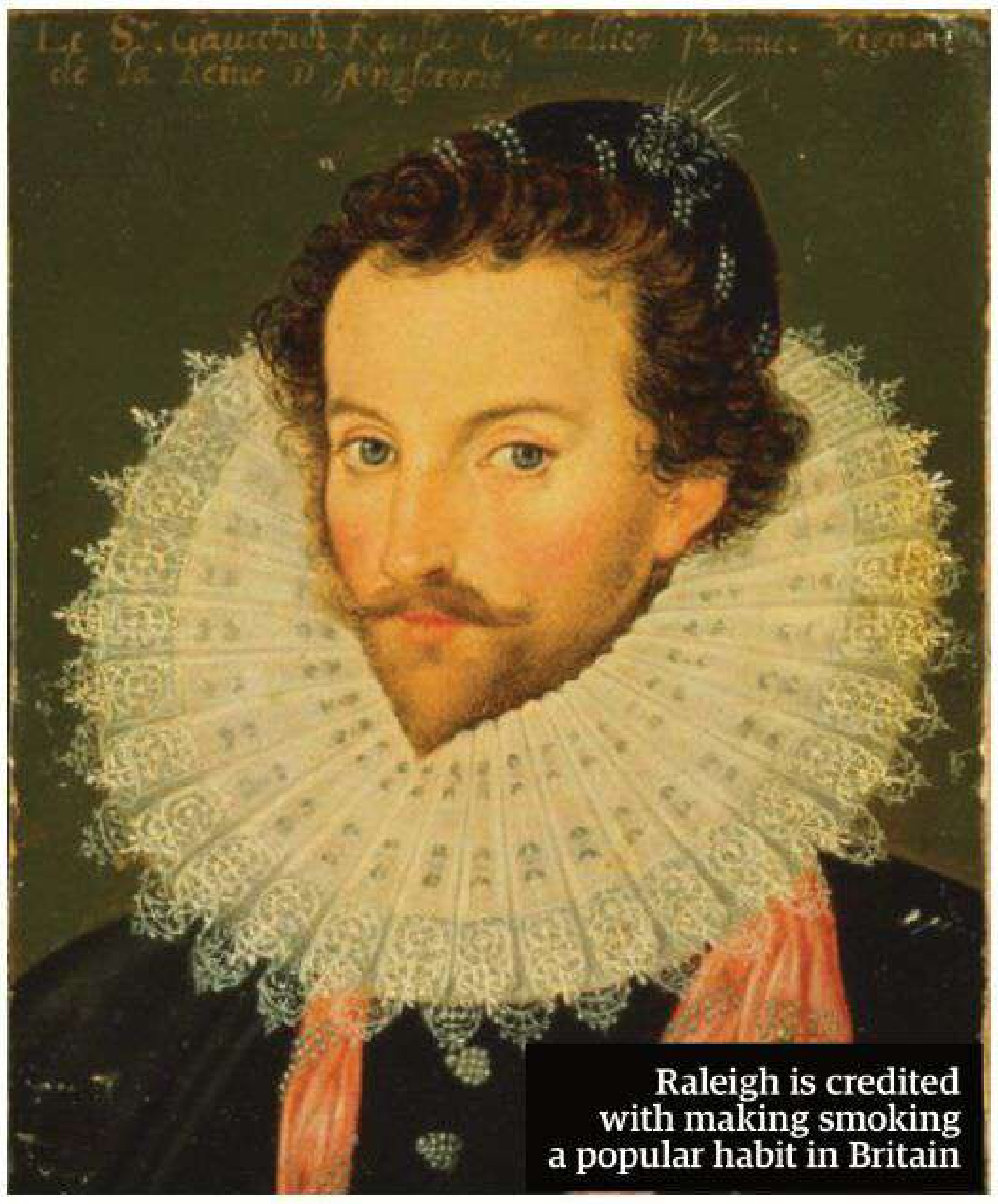
America to find the fabled land, but his endeavour proved unsuccessful. Despite returning home with no gold, he found himself once more in the favours of Queen Elizabeth I for his role in the capture of Cadiz, a port in Spain. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I appointed Raleigh as the governor of Jersey, a role in which he remained for the next three years, and through which he managed to modernise most of Jersey's defences.

The sudden death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 was a severe blow to Raleigh's standing in society. Many people had claimed that the audacious and arrogant Raleigh had only been safe because the queen had a soft spot for him, and upon the ascension of James I, it certainly seemed that way. King James I had never met Raleigh, but Raleigh's jealous enemies fed the new king a web of stories and gossip in an attempt to sully Raleigh's reputation. It worked.

The same year, Raleigh was allegedly implicated in a plot to overthrow the new king, known as the Main Plot. Raleigh was arrested for treason and sentenced to death. King James I was advised to reduce the sentence – which he did – to life imprisonment, and Raleigh and his family were sent to the Tower of London to live out their punishment. Imprisonment was by no means difficult on the Raleighs. Comfortably furnished, Raleigh lived not just with his family, but with a team of servants to tend to their every whim. Incarceration proved fruitful to Raleigh, and in 1614 he completed *History Of The World*, one of his most expansive oeuvres.

After years of familiarity with Queen Elizabeth I, Raleigh had a fairly clear idea of what King James I wanted from *his* empire. In 1616, Raleigh managed to convince the monarch to let him go on his second voyage in search of El Dorado once again. Making promises to the king to set up a gold mine and to avoid interfering with the Spanish, Raleigh was granted his wish. James I issued a royal pardon, which gave Raleigh the freedom to leave his prison – although the warrant did not remove the treason charges that hung over his head.

Before setting sail on what was to be his final voyage, King James I – who was attempting a reconciliation with the Spanish after years of war – ordered Raleigh to avoid any conflict with the Spanish. Raleigh agreed. Raleigh allegedly fell ill on the journey, and his lieutenant took charge of the voyage, eventually ordering the burning of a small Spanish village.

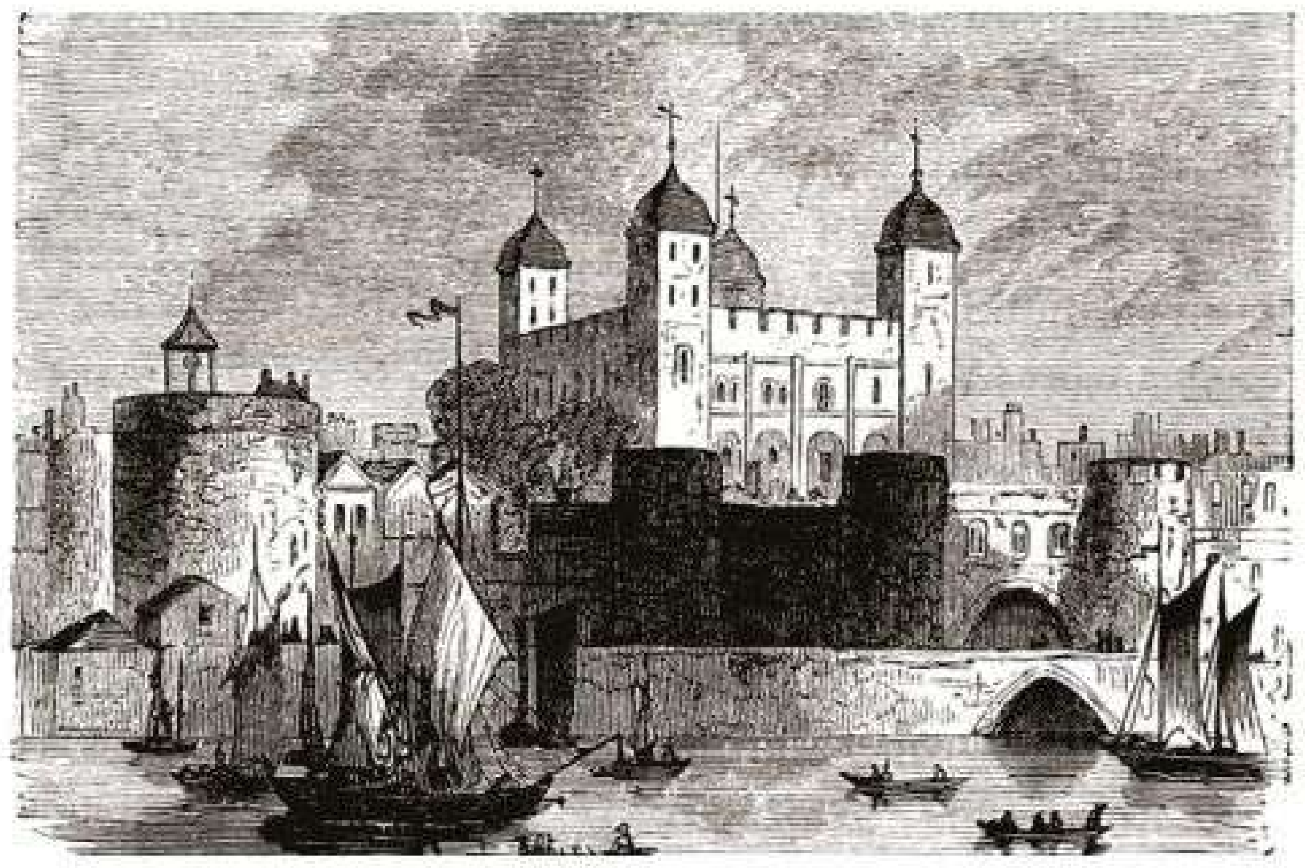

Raleigh is credited with making smoking a popular habit in Britain

Raleigh's body was buried with a tin of tobacco and his favourite pipe. His head was presented to his wife

To make matters worse, Raleigh's promise of a gold mine turned out to be an empty one, and the crew returned to England with no gold and having disobeyed the king. Enraged, King James I re-issued an arrest warrant for Raleigh for his 1603 charges of treason, but this time the king determined that Raleigh was to be executed.

On 29 October 1618, Raleigh was taken to the Palace of Westminster, where he was to be beheaded. His embalmed head was given to his widow, while his body was buried in a local graveyard, and later laid to rest at a small church in Westminster.

Death might not have been the noble ending that Raleigh's reputation deserved, but it was certainly characteristic of Raleigh's turbulent life. His explorations were key to discovering what lay outside Britain, and his audacity – both in his personal life and his professional one – made him a pioneer before his time.



Defining moment

Raleigh is incarcerated 1603

Not for the first time in his life, and certainly not for the last, Raleigh is locked up in the Tower of London. Charged with treason and sentenced to life imprisonment, Raleigh and his family stay in the Tower of London until 1616. Free from distractions and the perils of daily life, Raleigh manages to write *History Of The World* in 1614. Life wasn't hard for Raleigh here – he had his family with him, as well as his servants, and his lifestyle was comfortable. His only severe punishment was that he was forbidden from leaving.

Becomes governor of Jersey
Proof of having reinstated himself with Queen Elizabeth I, Raleigh is appointed the illustrious position of governor of Jersey. As governor, Raleigh modernises much of the island's defences. **1600**

A new king reigns
Upon Elizabeth I's death in 1603, her successor is named as King James I. Enemies of Raleigh work hard to sully his reputation, and charges of treason are soon levelled at Raleigh. **1603**

Sets sail for gold
Knowing about King James I's desire for gold, Raleigh convinces the king to liberate him so he can set sail for the legendary gold mine that he pursued in 1594. **1616**

Disobeys the king
Tragically, Raleigh returns empty handed and having done the one thing that King James I insisted that Raleigh refrain from doing: attacking the Spanish. King James I is furious. **1617**

1618

Execution ordered
Upon his return to England after his expedition, Raleigh – who has both returned empty handed, and disobeyed King James' orders by attacking the Spanish – is re-arrested for his 1603 crimes of treason. This time he is sentenced to death. Raleigh is to be beheaded in the Old Palace Yard at the Palace of Westminster. The executioner is claimed to have been a nervous and hesitant man, and Raleigh's last words are to the executioner, explaining: "Strike, man, strike!" His head is embalmed and given to his wife, while his body is eventually laid to rest in St Margaret's in Westminster. **1618**

A Dutch ship, Half Moon, entering Hudson Bay. Britain's commercial ambitions were spurred on by competition from France, Spain and the Netherlands

© Alamy

Kingdom of trade and enterprise

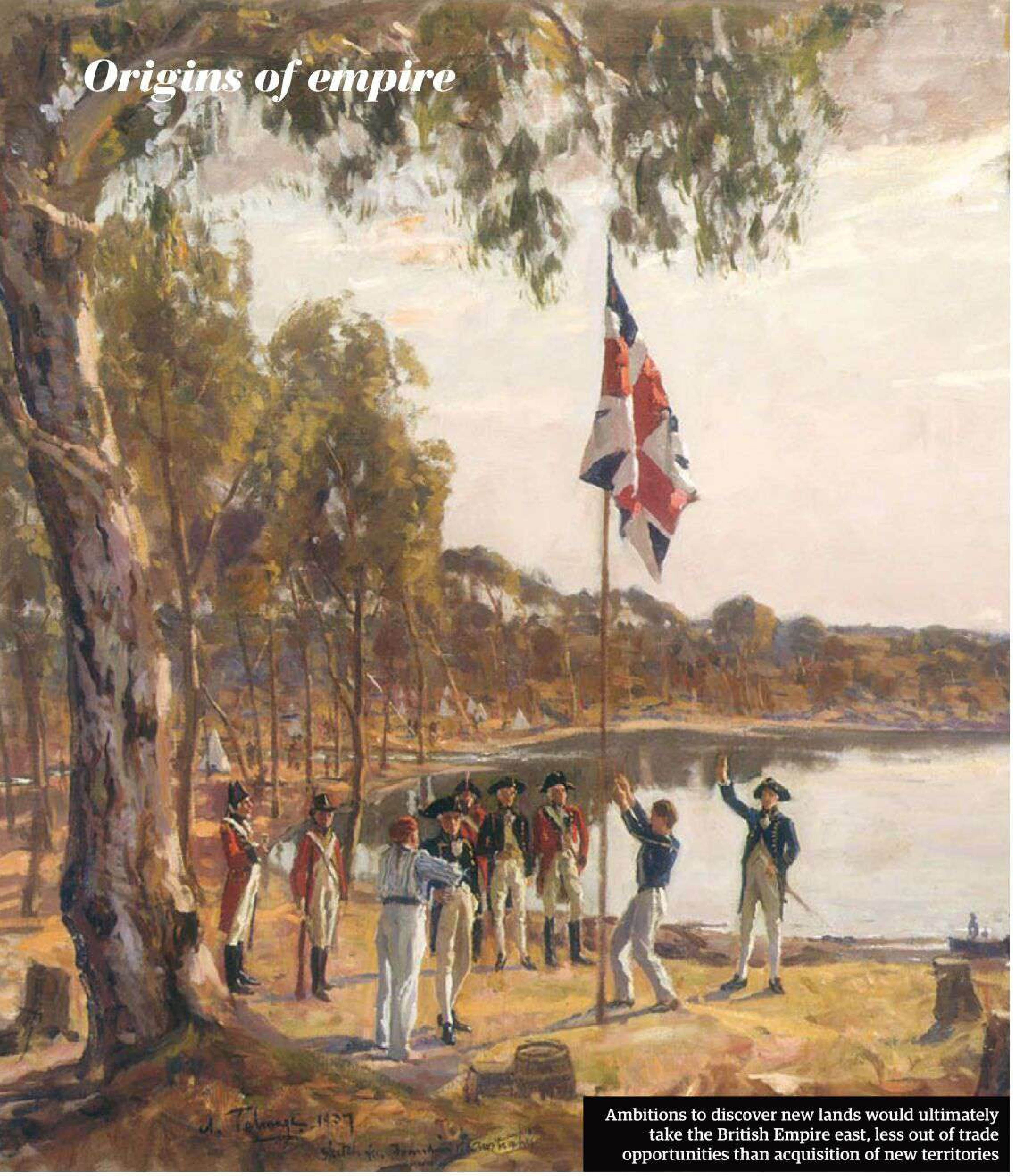
From the shores of Ireland to the furthest reaches of the known world, a small island in the cold Atlantic Ocean set its sights on possessing all

History has seen many empires come and go. Ancient armies that razed new lands to the ground and rebuilt them in their image; great cultural giants that remade the world with military might and engineering prowess – each one a marvel of ingenuity, aggression and ambition. But none sits quite so close to the modern age as the imperial machine that rose from the collective kingdoms of Great Britain. In its many forms, the British Empire lasted close to four centuries and made one tiny island on the edge of the European mainland a force to be reckoned with.

Sir Walter Raleigh owes much to the failure of his half-brother Humphrey Gilbert to establish a thriving North American colony

But, unlike many of its historical forbears, the imperialism of Britain was not founded purely on aggressive invasion and conquest, but of trade. The rise of the merchant class, a progenitor for the modern middle classes, became the lifeblood of European expansion. After centuries of naval conflict with Spain and France, England (the beating heart of Britain) was now fighting a new war, not of conquest but of economics. Traders and privateers, gallant seaman willing to sail past the edges of map, were the new pioneers and it was their discoveries – of new lands, peoples and products – that saw the genesis of the British Empire's seeds sown overseas.

Over the next two centuries, the First Empire (as it came to be known) settled its roots in faraway lands, established new industries and trade routes, and battled with private companies and nations alike for control of a bountiful New World. With these new resources, Britain's economy boomed, as did its military DNA, and it soon became a power to rival the most ambitious of kingdoms.



Ambitions to discover new lands would ultimately take the British Empire east, less out of trade opportunities than acquisition of new territories

The New World: dark and mysterious lands hidden across vast oceans. That was what sat before the kingdom of England and its surrounding states in the mid- to late-1500s. The nation was in the midst of a 'Golden Age'; religious tensions had eased to a peace of sorts, the arts had flourished and an ecological bright spell had enabled England to recover her composure and begin to grow anew, blossoming into an 'English renaissance'.

Yet, for all its regeneration, England was falling behind in the race to claim the New World for its own. Spain and France, the other participants in the ever-changing dance of alliance and war in Europe, were already beginning to claim new lands beyond the map, establishing colonies and swelling the slave trade like never before. For Elizabeth I, the 'Virgin Queen', it was time for England to carve her pound of flesh and fortune across the tumultuous waves.

Elizabethan attempts to extend the kingdom into something grander were less than favourable in those early years. Two attempts by explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert to travel to the West Indies were largely unsuccessful; one in 1578 stalled before it reached North America, while the second, in 1583, reached Newfoundland. However, with no colonists left behind to stake the claim (and Gilbert's own unfortunate death on the return journey to England), the debacle left England as floundering as it has been before the expeditions even began.

Elizabeth's successor, the shrewd and ambitious James I, had grand plans for colonial expansion upon his ascension to the English throne. His position as the Scottish monarch enabled him to unite the kingdoms of Scotland, England and Wales with a diplomacy that none of his forebears had ever achieved - and it would be that unification that formed the first building block of what would become Britain, the empire.

In 1604, a year after becoming the monarch of England, James I negotiated the Treaty of London - an agreement that effectively ended the costly naval conflict with the pious Catholic state of Spain. With the oceans no less of a concern for the Crown, the Stuart monarch turned his attentions to expanding English interests abroad.

Seafarers were now a far more confident breed thanks to myriad technological breakthroughs during the English Renaissance. The use of astrolabes and compasses (which provided far more accurate means of navigating the oceans), innovations in cartography and the rise of larger, more powerful vessels known as galleons (which were far more resilient and large enough to be well stocked for a long ocean voyage into the unknown) paved the way for explorers to travel the oceans under royal sponsorship.

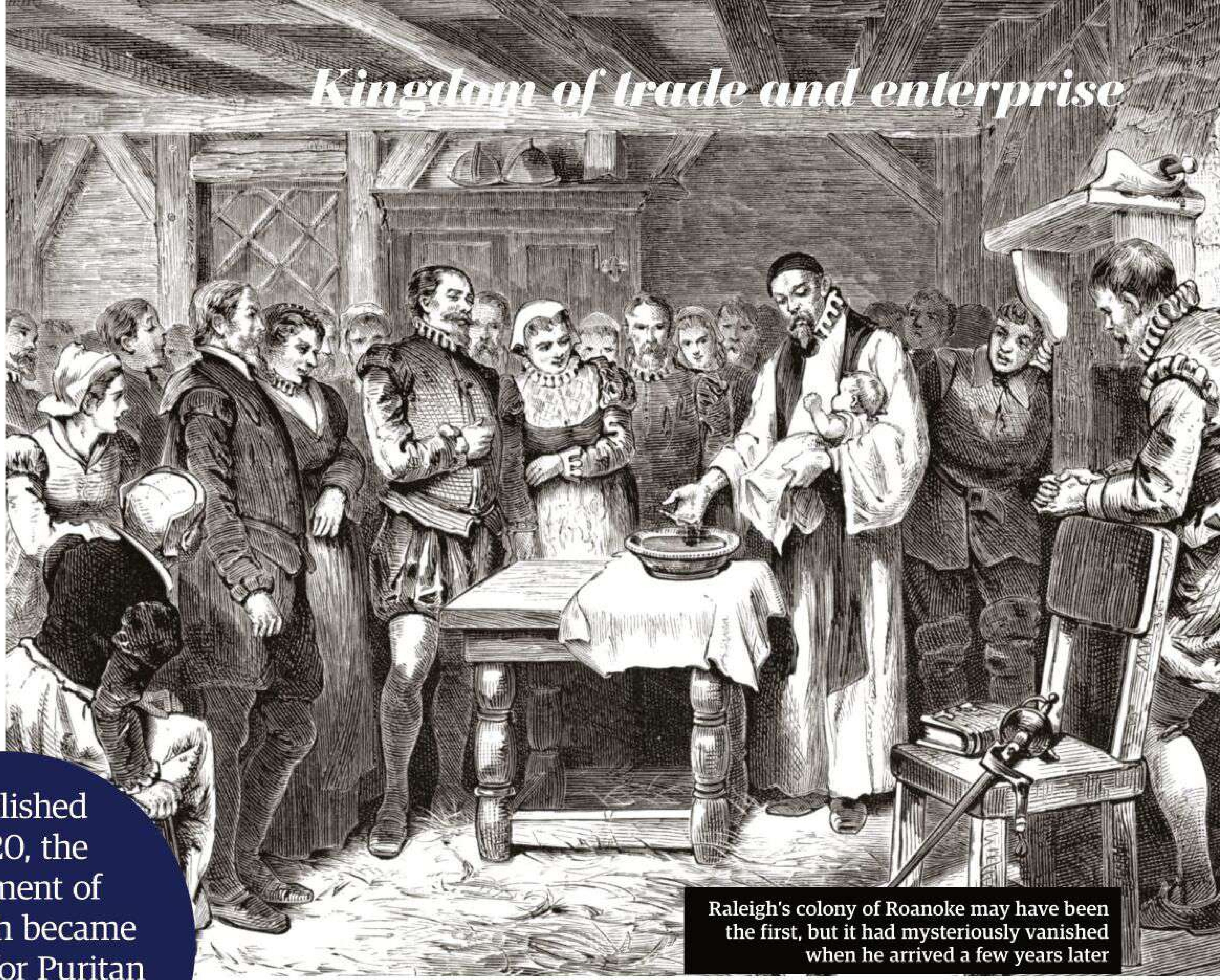
While North America offered ideal sources for new lands and resources, it was the Caribbean that

The private companies that shaped the New World

While the empire would eventually absorb a significant proportion of lands in the New World, it was privately owned mercantile businesses that undertook the dangerous task of discovering a new realm and establishing colonies and trade monopolies. From the English East India Company to the Royal African Company, these organisations were mercenaries of exploration and trade. They were almost fully autonomous and usually acted upon a royal charter that gave each one permission to conduct its business on behalf of the Crown.

Throughout the empire's existence, these maritime firms profited greatly from the expansion of the known world and the potentially resource-rich lands they happened upon would make them giants of trade in the region for decades in some cases. Each was created and royally sanctioned during different phases of colonial expansion as England, and later Britain, focused its attentions on different regions of the world. The Virginia Company and the Somers Isles Companies were two such firms sent out during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, both with eyes on the Americas and the Caribbean. Royal charters were a gold mine for these firms and provided a lasting investment in New World trade.

The Royal African Company provided gold from Gambia to the English Mint (1668-1722) and the coins produced bore both the company logo and the image of James II



Raleigh's colony of Roanoke may have been the first, but it had mysteriously vanished when he arrived a few years later

proved to be the empire's first lucrative stomping ground. Much like the Elizabethan missions, a number of these expeditions crumbled after a few years of initial colonisation (including Guiana in 1604, St Lucia in 1605 and Grenada in 1609). The search for gold was one of the many factors that led to their downfall.

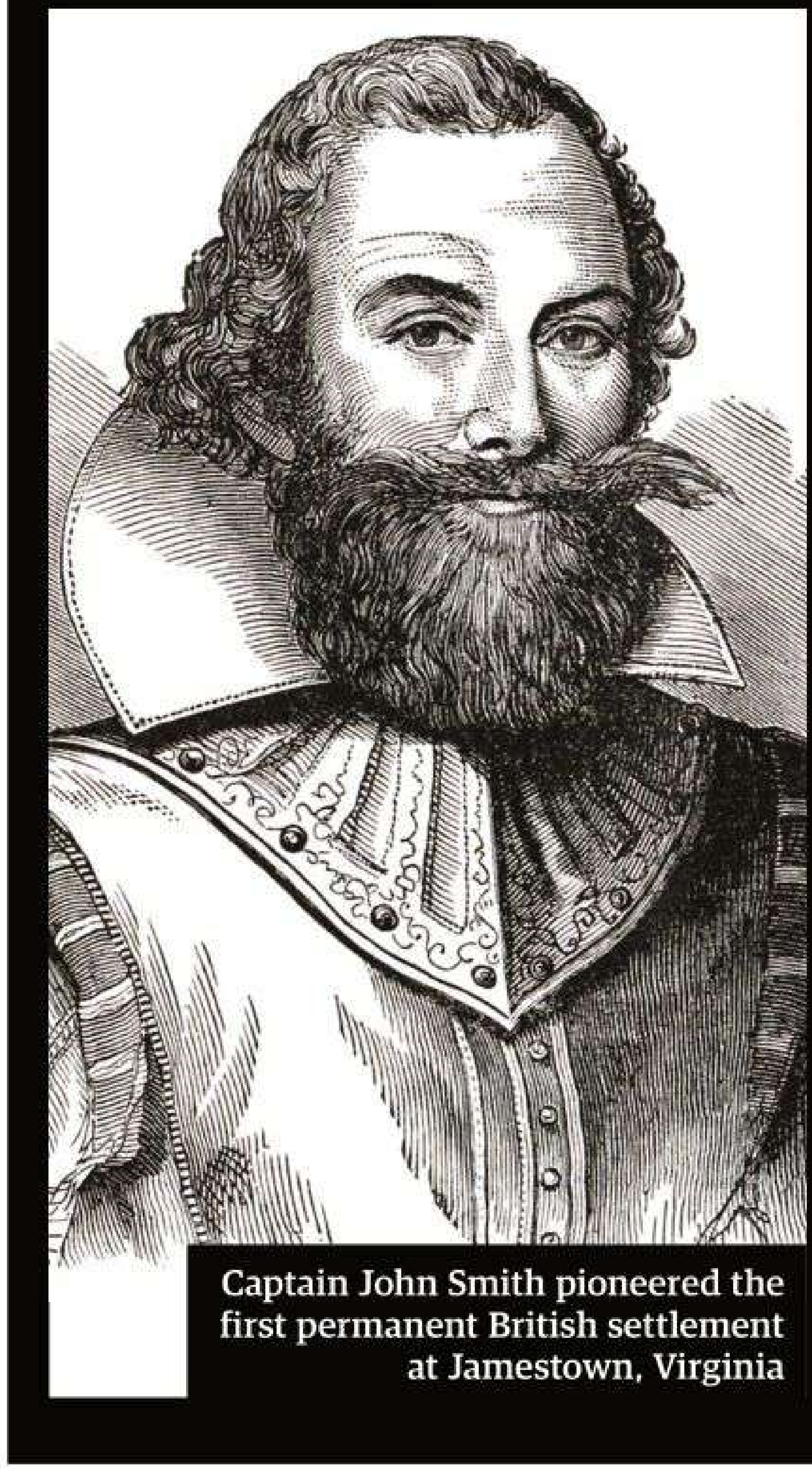
The wheels of expansion were slow to turn for England (this was, after all, the discovery of a brand new world whose treasures and resources had yet to reveal themselves), but eventually more colonies and settlements made lasting roots. So what helped these new colonies take hold where others had failed? The answer was the booming trade of another unlikely commodity: sugar. Settlements such as St Kitts (est. 1624), Barbados (est. 1627) and Nevis (est. 1628) soon became key plantations for the empire.

Established in 1620, the settlement of Plymouth became a haven for Puritan settlers making a home in the New World

As well as successes in the Caribbean, settlements were taking hold on the American mainland. Jamestown was the first and most significant to be discovered and claimed in 1607 alongside Virginia (which would eventually become the first Crown colony in the Americas). Plymouth was founded in 1620 by radical Puritans who famously made the long ocean voyage on the Mayflower, while Maryland was established 14 years later by Lord Baltimore for Roman Catholics fleeing persecution in England. As something of a counter move, the settlement of Rhode Island was founded in 1636 to provide a haven for all new settlers, regardless of their religious denomination.

Yet, as traders and privateers began to build new lives and self-autonomous economies, life back at home at the heart of the would-be empire was crumbling. The death of James I in 1625 led his sickly youngest son Charles I to the throne, and the new Stuart king's disastrous reign (compounded by unwisely amplified taxes and a growing division with Parliament) led to the unthinkable: civil war. The English Civil War was a catastrophic period for England as Royalists loyal to the king fought the Parliamentarians on every hill, field and plane in the land.

By 1646, the nation had been effectively crippled by the sheer loss of life, and when Parliament tried and executed the king three years later, England found itself a Commonwealth. While built upon hopes, dreams and good intentions, the Commonwealth eventually folded and Charles's son



Captain John Smith pioneered the first permanent British settlement at Jamestown, Virginia

Settling in the New World

For Puritan missionary Joshua Stroud, adapting to life in the settlement of Jamestown proves a challenge of his faith and his mettle

15 December 1606

After months of planning and the selling of our humble holdings in Oxford, my father, my two sisters and I set out in the pouring rain to travel to Plymouth. It's unusually wet for December and our cart can't seem to travel five miles before it and the horses are stuck in the moor again. We eventually arrive at the port and board one of three ships bound for the New World.

11 February 1607

We're on the way to establish a colony. A new 'Virginia', in honour of the late queen. The king - God save him - James, has funded this very trip. I'm on a ship paid for with royal coin! Father wouldn't approve of such excitement, but I need something to distract me from this voyage. The weather sours and lashes us with sheets of steely rain.

26 April 1607

On the sixth and twentieth day of April we spy our Virginia in the distance. The air is hot and humid on the skin, but anything is better than the stench of that hull. One of my sisters, young Ruth, came down with a fever in the last week of the voyage, but even she looks brighter as we enter the Bay of Chesapeake.

26 April 1607

We explored a little in those first few hours, Captain Archer taking point with the rest of the men. There are about 140 of us and most of us await the scout party's return on coast that leads away from the bay. When they return with water gathered from a nearby freshwater stream, I've never tasted something so pure. God is with us now, guiding us in this strange, new land.

15 June 1607

They came in the night. On all fours, with blood on their skin and the fires of Hell burning in their eyes. Bones in their noses and bows across their backs. Savages. They mean to murder us. We drive them off without loss of life. We now push further into the woodland, following a freshwater stream. It opens to a bigger river where we build shallops (small boats) to travel on.

27 August 1607

We travel much, searching for the right place to settle, and the journey can be both a blessing and a curse. We find oysters on our travels, which are delicious cooked over a fire, and sometimes find clearings burned to a cinder by the savages. The captain thinks we've found the right place. God is with us.

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> "It would be on the backs of slaves that the future British Empire would build its success and power"

was restored to the throne as Charles II. Despite England enduring both a savage civil conflict and a revolution, the colonies established in the New World were barely affected. These colonies were mainly self-sufficient, and the fact they were operated by private companies meant the empire continued to grow and evolve regardless of the metamorphosis at home.

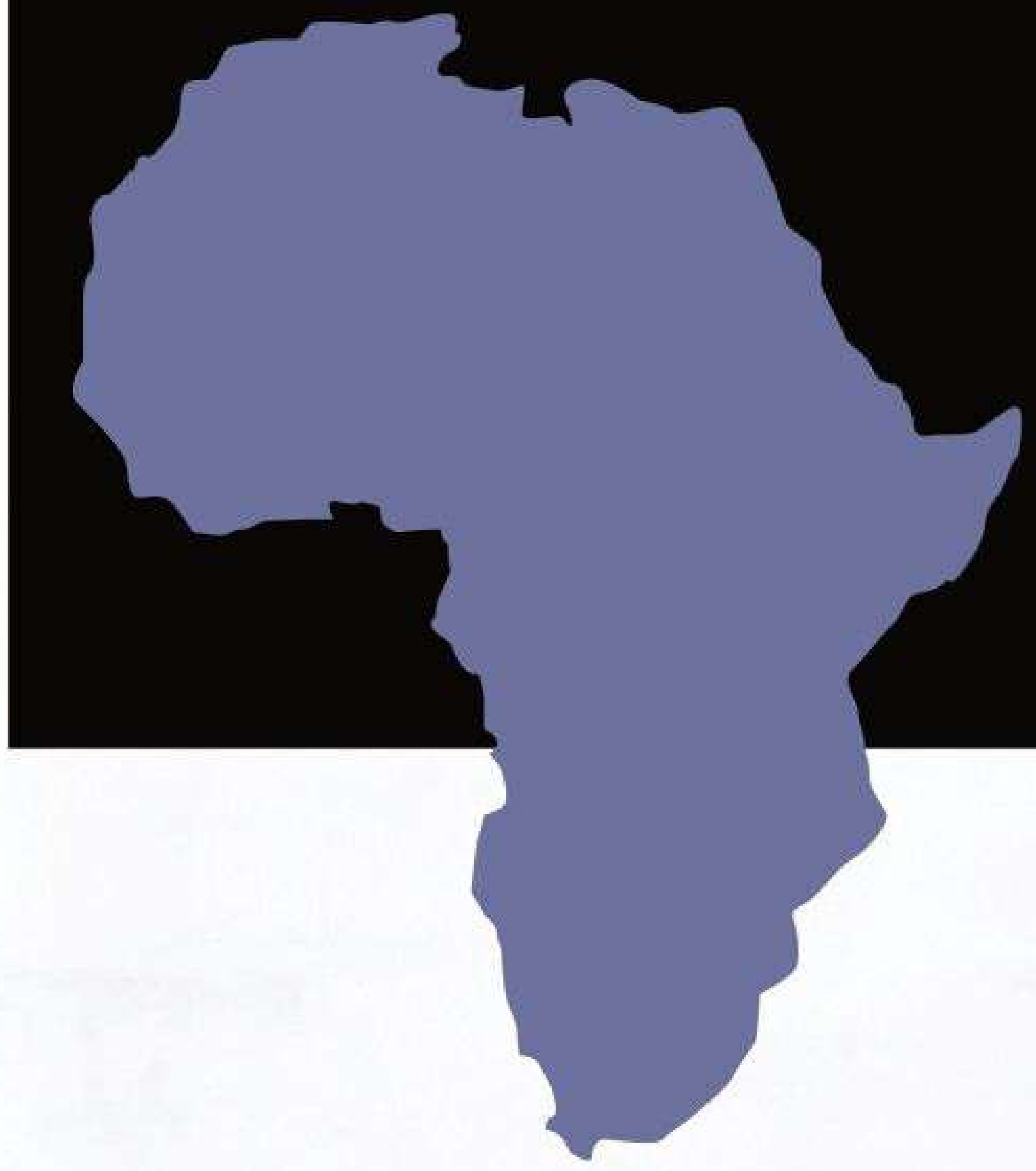
So, with new colonies and trade routes expanding the portfolio every year, global trade become the new frontier and battlefield. This being the Early Modern period, when such luxuries such as sugar, silks, spices and furs had been the reserve only of the wealthiest members of society, the sugar trade that was growing in the Caribbean proved to be extremely lucrative. It wasn't long before locally captured slaves (and those imported from Africa) were utilised to work the fields, while Dutch ships were ferrying the cargo and filling English coffers with wanton abandon. However, it wasn't long before this economic symbiosis with the Dutch soon deteriorated.

When Parliament decreed in 1651 that only English ships could profit from the raw cargo produced by English plantations and settlements, relations with the United Dutch Provinces soon grew hostile. This led to three successive Anglo-Dutch Wars, which raged from 1652 to 1674. These conflicts would prove expensive, but the strength of the Royal Navy proved as resilient as ever and England soon gained stronger footholds in both the Caribbean and the Americas as a result.

And while the Americas proved less lucrative than England's trade outposts in the Caribbean, the export of raw materials was booming. By 1686, around £1 million worth of silks, furs, sugars and other tropical wares and perishables were winging their way across the waves to a domestic market that was enjoying the spoils of expansion. The current monarch, Charles II, was a man of lavish tastes and the influx of unusual treasures from far-flung lands fuelled a debauched courtly lifestyle that did the Crown's public image no favours in the eyes of the public.

Yet for all these commodities, there was another industry that was fuelling the English colonial effort like no other: slaves. The trade of human flesh became the lifeblood of the nation's economy and it would be on the backs of slaves that the future empire would build its success and power. Both the Caribbean and the Americas proved to

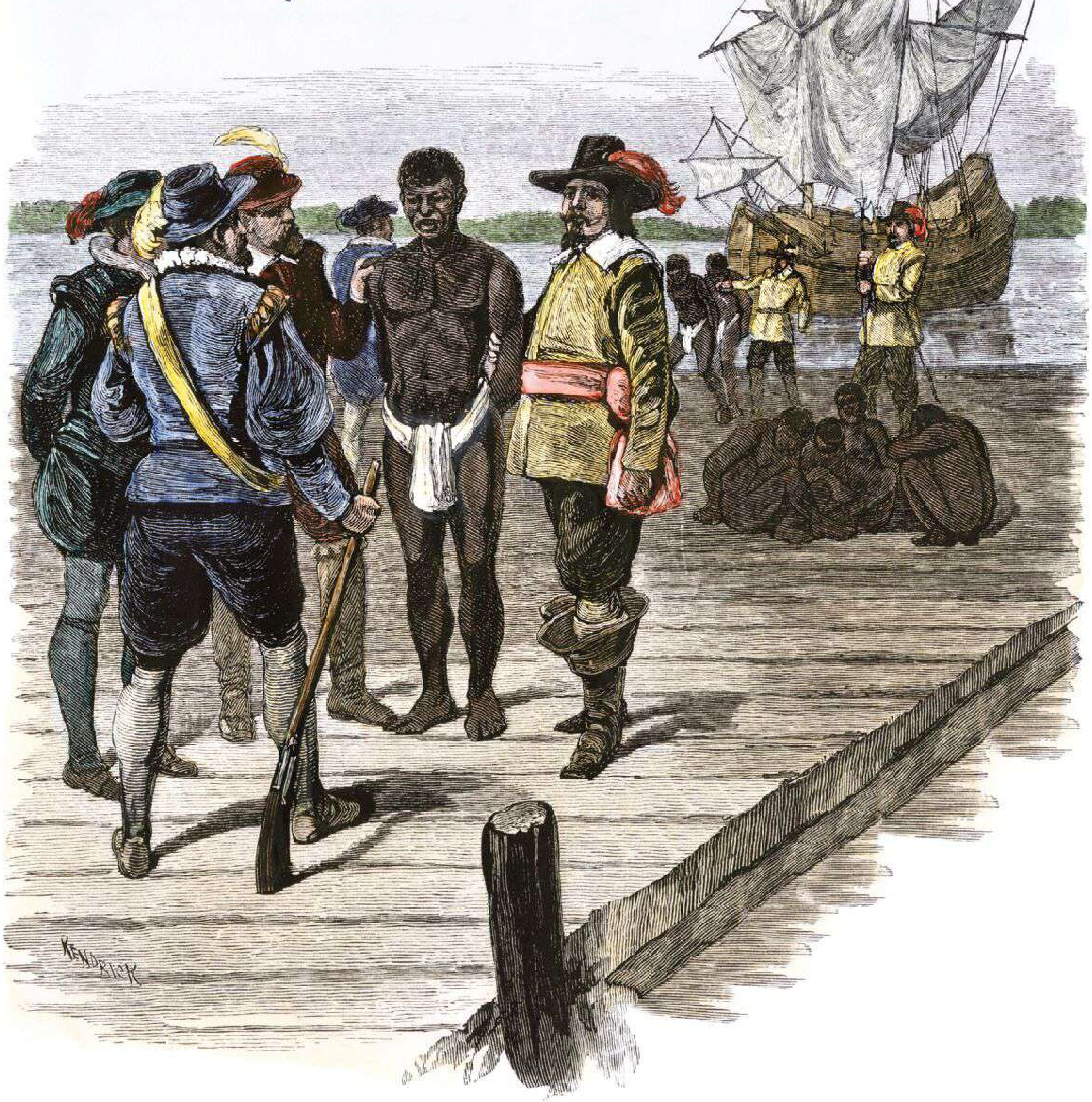
How did the empire acquire its West African slaves?



Considering just how important the industry of slave labour became (and it was a true industry, one that fuelled the empire's colonial expansion), it's not always obvious how Britain forced so many people into enslavement. Were they hunted down and imprisoned in the same way the Vikings' slaves had been? Actually yes, but a great many were acquired by a far more diplomatic means. The British were not going to shed blood if they didn't have to.

Africa proved a bountiful source of human labour and many of these slaves were bought and traded from the chiefs of local tribes – although some tried to sell prisoners-of-war from domestic conflicts and convicts, ultimately the origin of these slaves meant very little to the traders as long as they were fit and free of disease.

The empire also hired gangs of raiders, enticed by the promise of guns and ammunition (a new commodity on the continent). These gangs attacked villages and settlements inland and brought back droves of new slaves. And, of course, Britain wasn't averse to roaming the coastlines of West Africa, turning musket and shot on natives who simply lacked sufficient weaponry to defend themselves.



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Inside the Navigation Acts

The Navigation Acts remain a hot topic among historians, especially in regard to their impact on the empire's economy and how it treated its colonies, but what were these English laws and how did they affect the economy of the growing First Empire?

The five Navigation Acts (enacted into law in 1651, 1660, 1663, 1673 and 1696) were Parliament's way of controlling the ebb and flow of trading in and around its colonies. The thinking behind them was utterly tribalistic in its simplicity: Parliament believed that England's dominance in colonial trade could only grow by directly boycotting other nations. This meant abandoning the previously accepted system of transporting goods via the vessels of other countries and essentially severing ties in a mutually beneficial relationship. Starting in 1651, these laws drove away Dutch ships (the most co-operative of the nations that established colonies and trade routes in Africa, Asia and the Americas) and the practice lasted for around two centuries.

The laws placed even more stipulations on resources harvested, farmed, hunted or crafted in the colonies. These goods could only be carried by English ships and could only be traded at English ports, so the government could tax the goods and divert a slice of its profits back into the Royal Treasury. This practice may have seemed like a boon for the Crown, but it ended up alienating certain trades, including those that harvested grain in the Americas. This led to a burgeoning black market that sought better prices outside of the empire, smuggling goods to foreign ships behind the backs of patrolling Royal Navy vessels and troops.

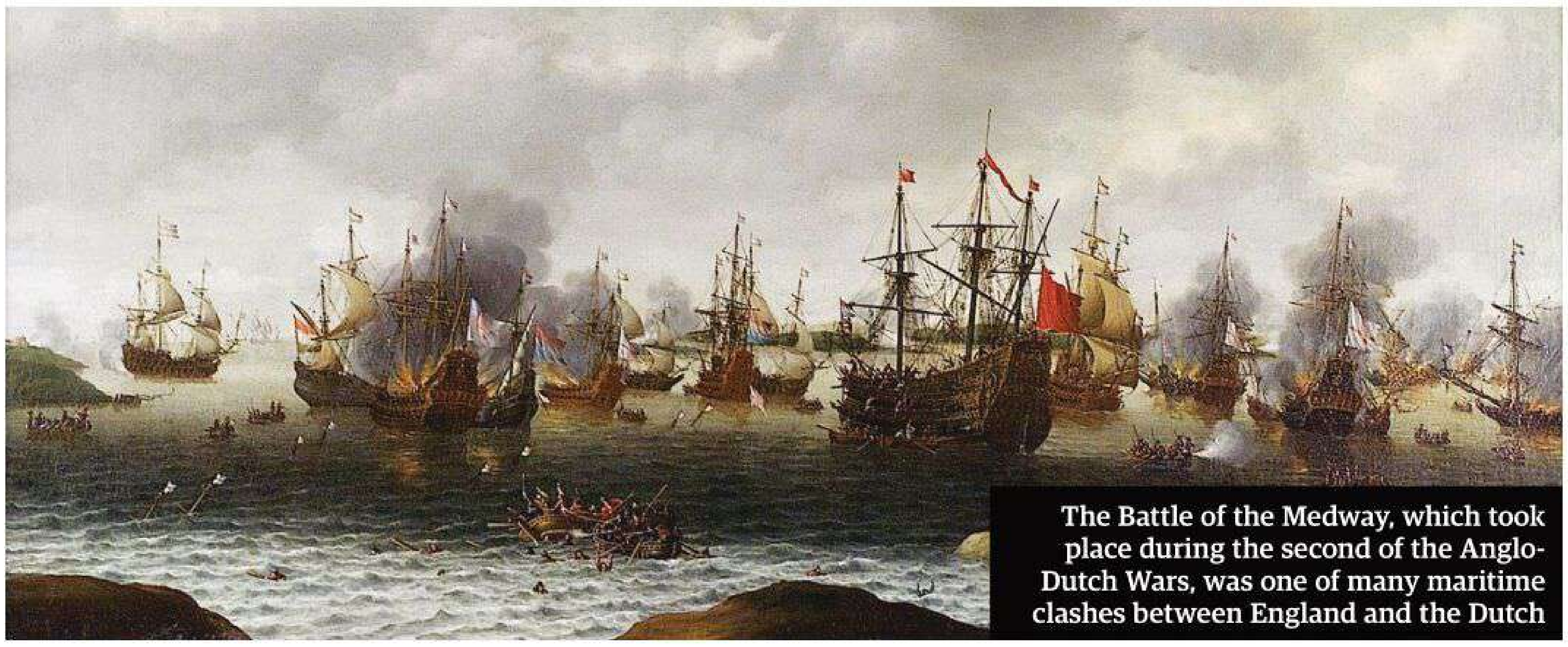
be an ample source for human labour (much like it had for Columbus on behalf of Spain), but it was from the growing English presence in Africa that sprung the most bountiful platform.

Leading the way in this trade was the Royal African Company. Inaugurated and sponsored by the English Crown, the company provided a monopoly on slaves for the House of Stuart and served as one of the most prolific and successful mercantile slavers ever known. It plied its trade mostly off the coast of West Africa and provided all the forced labour needed to build the settlements in the Caribbean and the Americas into lasting colonies. Slavery became the fuel that powered the formation of the First British Empire, and by the time the practice was abolished in 1807, Britain was responsible for the transportation of a staggering 3.3 million African slaves to the Americas and a third of all slaves moved across the Atlantic.

For Britain, gaining monopolies on resources in the New World was the only way to make up for the ground and time it had lost to the earlier expansion of Spain and the United Dutch States. Around the same time that England was expanding its growing imperialism in Africa, Charles II created another private mercantile adventure aimed at controlling the extremely lucrative fur trade in Rupert's Land. Now modern-day Manitoba, the locale would eventually form part of the Dominion of Canada - which would in turn become one of the empire's largest and most loyal overseas fiefdoms.

The Hudson Bay Company operated for over 200 years from that point onwards and remained at the forefront of the fur trade. With royal sponsorship, the HBC became one of the most powerful trading bodies in the world - in fact, by one point the company had transformed into a landholding giant with an impressive 15 per cent of North American acreage to its name.

Elsewhere, the highly profitable slave trade continued to energise the economy at home while supporting a hyperactive expansion in the New World. A triangle slave trade was formed between the Caribbean, the Americas and the English ports of Liverpool and Bristol (which served as the heart



The Battle of the Medway, which took place during the second of the Anglo-Dutch Wars, was one of many maritime clashes between England and the Dutch

of the imperial slaving industry). Atop this less than savoury platform, the English colonies began to expand exponentially, but this economic growth didn't come peacefully.

Every step of the way, the young empire was constantly at odds with the Spanish, the French and the Dutch for control over these distant lands. The end of the 17th century was peppered with military confrontations and it was here that the Royal Navy was slowly moulded into the grand force it would be in years to come. England clashed regularly with the Dutch in Asia, but the conflict would eventually be put to one side when William of Orange ascended to the English throne in 1688.

The United Dutch States and England became allies, entering the bloody Nine Years' War hand-in-hand, but the two nations still operated autonomously from one another. Spain's power on the sea was beginning to wane, so France emerged as England's most fearsome opponent in that war, and the conflicts that followed. The Dutch Navy struggled to keep pace during the Nine Years' War and the conflict proved England to be the dominant naval power in Europe and the colonies of the New World.

The empire, built upon the economic bounty of its colonial conquests and the growing strength of its naval might, had been erected in all but name and that sense of imperialism was soon reflected in the Act of Union passed in 1707, which bound England, Wales and Scotland together as Great Britain. Unified under a new title, the metamorphosis of a single island into a formidable empire was complete.

Britain's navy continued to find itself engaged in battles with the French across the empire, including in defence of its many colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas and Asia. The Seven Years' War (1755-1764) was a particularly bloody affair, starting when Great Britain seized French territories in North America and hundreds of French ships loaded with bounty headed for France. The conflict lasted the better part of a decade and ended with the Treaty of Paris after significant losses for the French.

The treaty saw a great deal of the lands confiscated on either side returned, but a weakened France was forced to relinquish control of Canada, Dominica, Grenada, Tobago, the Grenadines and Saint Vincent. The acquisitions were a huge boon for Britain and a symbol of its growing power across the world. However, for all those additions to the empire, discontent was beginning to simmer over back in the Americas.

Of all its colonies overseas, the North American ones had proved the most transformative. Over the late-17th century and early-18th century, those once dark and foreboding settlements had grown exponentially into the Thirteen Colonies, stretching

Slave cargos often diminished by half by the time ships made the cross-Atlantic journey due to terrible conditions

Blow by blow: The Boston Tea Party

Tensions were already boiling over in the North American colonies, but it would take the destruction of a ship's worth of tea bound for England in Massachusetts Bay that would light the spark of the American Revolution.

The Tea Act, 1773

In order to rescue the financially weakened East India Company, Parliament adjusted import duties on tea and essentially granted the East India Company a monopoly that undercut every other trader. The American Crown colonies saw it as unconstitutional and rejected it – except for a family of traders in Boston.

Arrival and appeal

The first of the consignee ships, the Dartmouth, arrived in the Bay of Boston on 27 November, followed by two others. A group of Patriots, led by Samuel Adams, attempted to convince Governor Thomas Hutchinson (the father of two of the captains, and the cousin of the other), but to no avail.

Thrown to the water

At midnight, Adams and members of the pro-independence movement Sons of Liberty (dressed as Mohawk Indians, no less) boarded the ships, broke open the cargo and began throwing it into the bay. Over three hours, 45 tons of tea (worth $1 million today) was ruined.

Defining moment

East India Company created

31 December 1600

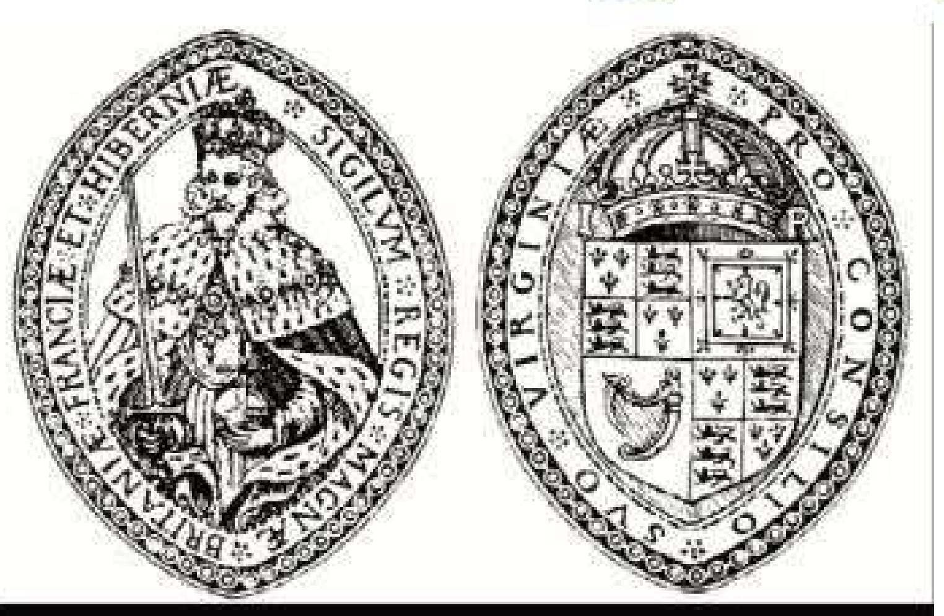
One of the most influential, and ultimately one of the most powerful, private trade companies to arise from the birth of English imperialism, the East India Company is officially granted a charter by Elizabeth I, known as 'The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading in the East Indies'. It almost immediately establishes the first trading posts in the East Indies and begins erecting colonies throughout the region. It is the efforts of this private organisation that sow the seeds of colonial power in India and beyond.

"The young empire was constantly at odds with the Spanish, French and Dutch for control of lands"

Timeline

1584

- **Raleigh establishes Roanoke**
  A favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, English explorer and privateer Walter Raleigh is charged with establishing territory in the New World. He sends a shift to this new 'Virginia' to establish the first English colony, Roanoke.
  25 March 1584



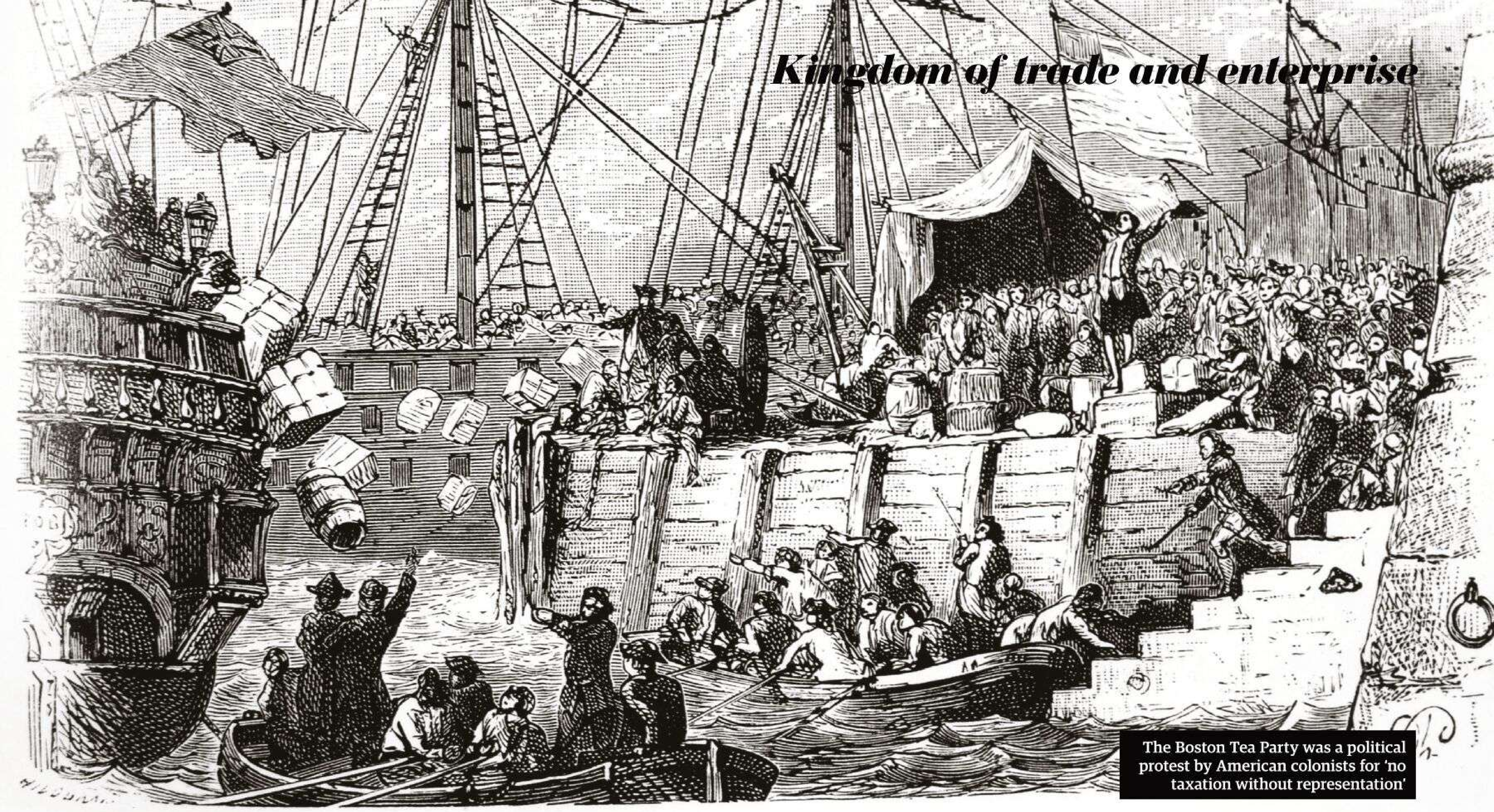
Virginia Company of London Seal, 1606-1624

- **Jamestown colony is erected**
  After many failed attempts to establish a lasting colony in the New World (including Walter Raleigh's Roanoke, which mysteriously vanished into thin air), 'James Fort' is created in 1607 by the Virginia Company of London.
  4 May 1607

- **The Pilgrims leave for the New World**
  Some 100 Puritans leave the port of Plymouth in 1620 aboard the Mayflower. Two months later, the ship arrives on the shores of Cape Cod and they establish the first Puritan colony in New England in December of that year.
  September 1620

- **First Navigation Act is passed**
  The first of many changes to English legislation regarding colonial trade, the Navigation Acts decree that resources harvested and gathered from English colonies can only be carried by English ships, which in effect destroys the co-operative relationship with the Dutch.
  9 October 1651

- **New Amsterdam becomes New York**
  After years of Dutch rule, the colony of Fort Amsterdam is signed over to the English following extended fighting between England and the United Dutch States. It's renamed New York in honour of King James I's son, the duke of York.
  8 September 1664



The Boston Tea Party was a political protest by American colonists for 'no taxation without representation'

from New England in the north to the edge of the Floridas in the south. The Americas were scattered with settlements, but only 13 had been granted Crown colony status. These territories had some semblance of self-government, but tensions were beginning to grow as the government in London became more involved in their legislation, increasing taxes and the like.

Following the destruction of a shipment of tea at the 'Boston Tea Party' on 16 December 1773 by Patriots angry at the 'unconstitutional' taxes the British continued to levy, Britain had been forced to effectively suffocate the rebellious colony of Massachusetts by closing off the Port of Boston (as well as removing its power of self-governance). The Crown colony rebelled, created its own Shadow Cabinet and was soon joined by 12 other states that recognised the precedent that had been set by this show of British force.

When the colonists - Patriots who were soon identifying themselves as Americans rather than British - finally rejected parliamentary control in 1775 and moved towards a position of self-governance, the empire stood aghast. Colonies had

Defining moment

Treaty of Utrecht signed

11 April 1713

The Treaty of Utrecht signals the end of the bloody Spanish War of Succession, which has seen an alliance between the British and the Dutch battling with Spain, France, Portugal and Savoy for control of the Spanish throne and its extended imperial territories. The treaty is one of many documents throughout the First Empire that help to swell its colonial portfolio with new lands and additional colonies. Britain gains Newfoundland, Acadia, Gibraltar and Minorca from both France and Spain, increasing the overall size of the First Empire.

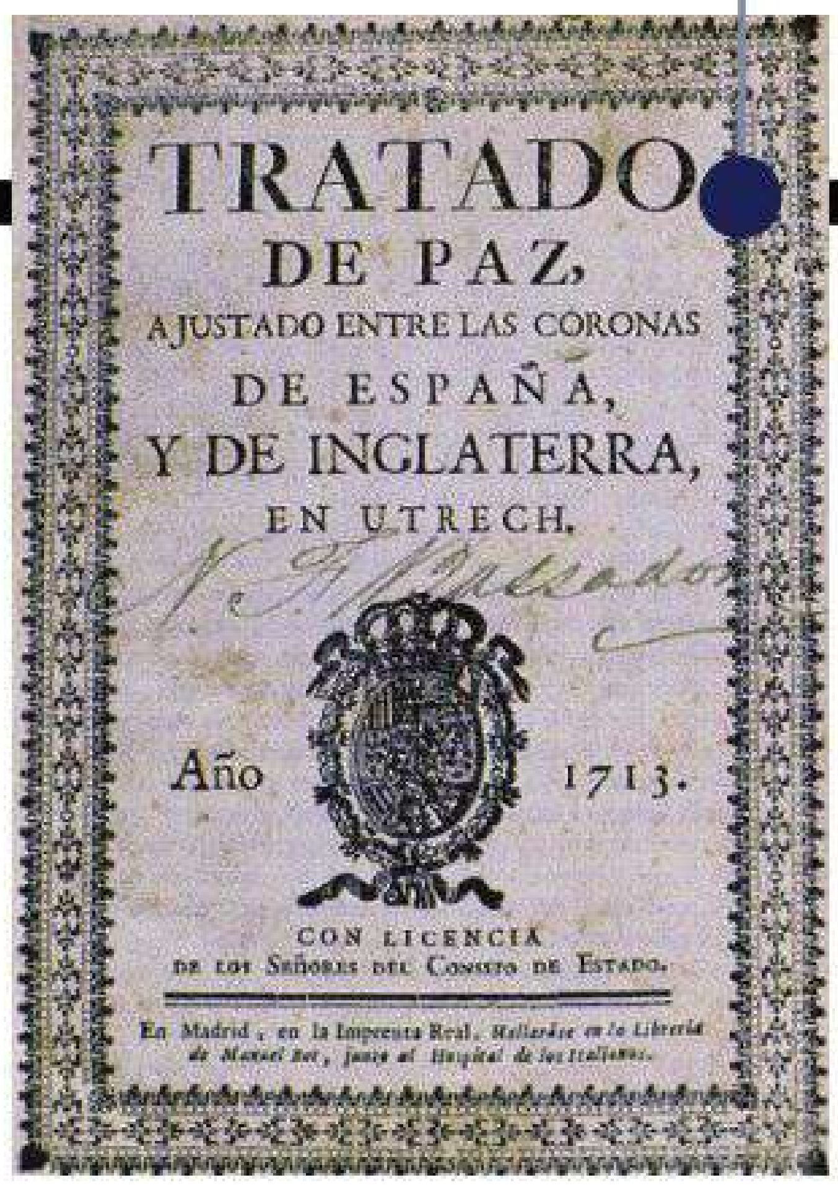
Defining moment

James Cook discovers Australia

April 1770

In 1770, explorer James Cook becomes one of the first Europeans to set foot on Australian soil, but his discovery of Australia and New Zealand is by pure chance. In fact, his expedition isn't even one of colonial discovery and conquest, but of scientific curiosity. Commissioned by King George III, the Royal Navy and Royal Society expedition is the first of three led by Captain Cook to the South Pacific. Its aim is to follow and observe the transit of Venus as it passes across the Sun. The crew's path brings them to the coast of New Zealand in September 1769 and then on to Australia a few months later.

Britain is formed
The Act of Union serves as one of the most influential changes to English (and, as a result, British) legislation. It unifies Scotland, Wales and England as a single nation, Great Britain, and transforms what was once a group of fragmented states into a powerful whole.
1 May 1707



TRATADO
DE PAZ,
AJUSTADO ENTRE LAS CORONAS
DE ESPAÑA,
Y DE INGLATERRA,
EN UTRECH.

Año 1713.

CON LICENCIA
DE LOS SEÑORES DEL CONSEJO DE ESTADO.

En Madrid, en la Imprenta Real. Hallaráse en la Librería de Manuel Bot, junto al Hospital de los Italianos.

Seven Years' War ends
The Treaty of Paris marks the end of the bloody maritime conflict between Great Britain, Spain, France and Portugal for control of their respective colonial interests. Great Britain proves to be the stronger participant and the treaty once again swells the empire with new lands.
10 February 1763

The Boston Tea Party
In defiance of the Tea Acts, 12 American crown colonies defy Great Britain and refuse to allow this monopolised cargo pass into their ports. A group of captains agree to carry the cargo into the Bay of Boston, but the supplies are publicly destroyed by a group of Patriots led by Samuel Adams.
16 December 1773

The American War of Independence
Following years of tension, 13 of the American Crown colonies reject British rule and declare themselves independent. Britain attempts to bring the Patriots to heel, but the intervention of the French sees Britain forced to recognise the United States of America as being independent of the empire.
19 April 1775

1783

Treaty of Paris
That recognition of independence is made official by the Treaty of Paris, which sees Britain and the USA meet to determine the end of the conflict. The loss of the 13 colonies sees Britain shift its attentions away from the Americas and marks the end of the First Empire.
3 September 1783

The toll of the American Revolution

18,900

Number of French and American soldiers at Siege of Yorktown

80%

The rise in the population of black slaves in the Americas by 1780

220

Number of soldiers killed in the Battle of Plassey with the Mughal Empire in 1757

£9.5

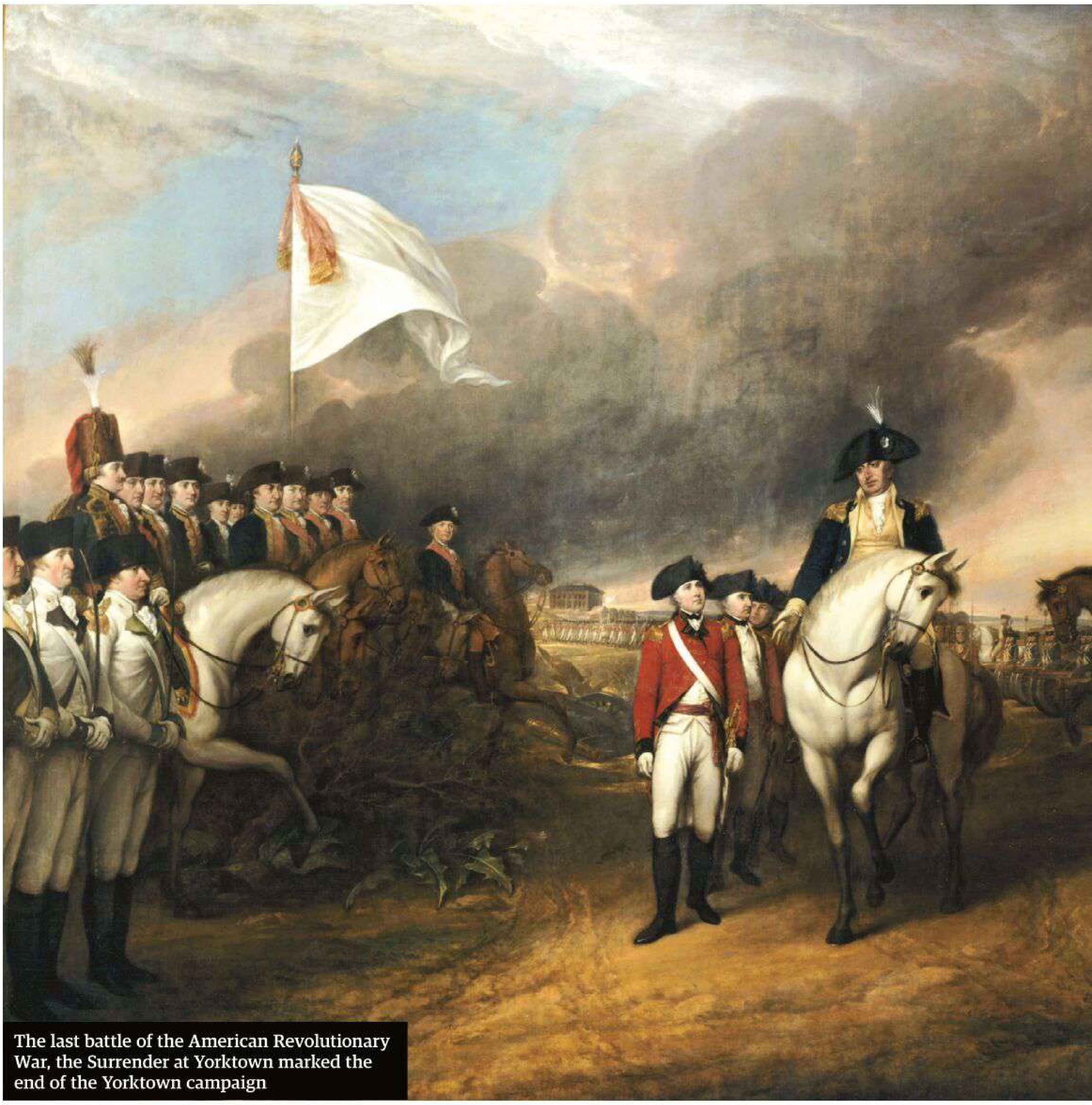
In millions, the annual interest generated by Great Britain's debt following the Revolutionary War

13

Number of kings, queens and protectors that ruled England and Britain during the First Empire

20

The number of colonies that comprised British America in 1775



The last battle of the American Revolutionary War, the Surrender at Yorktown marked the end of the Yorktown campaign

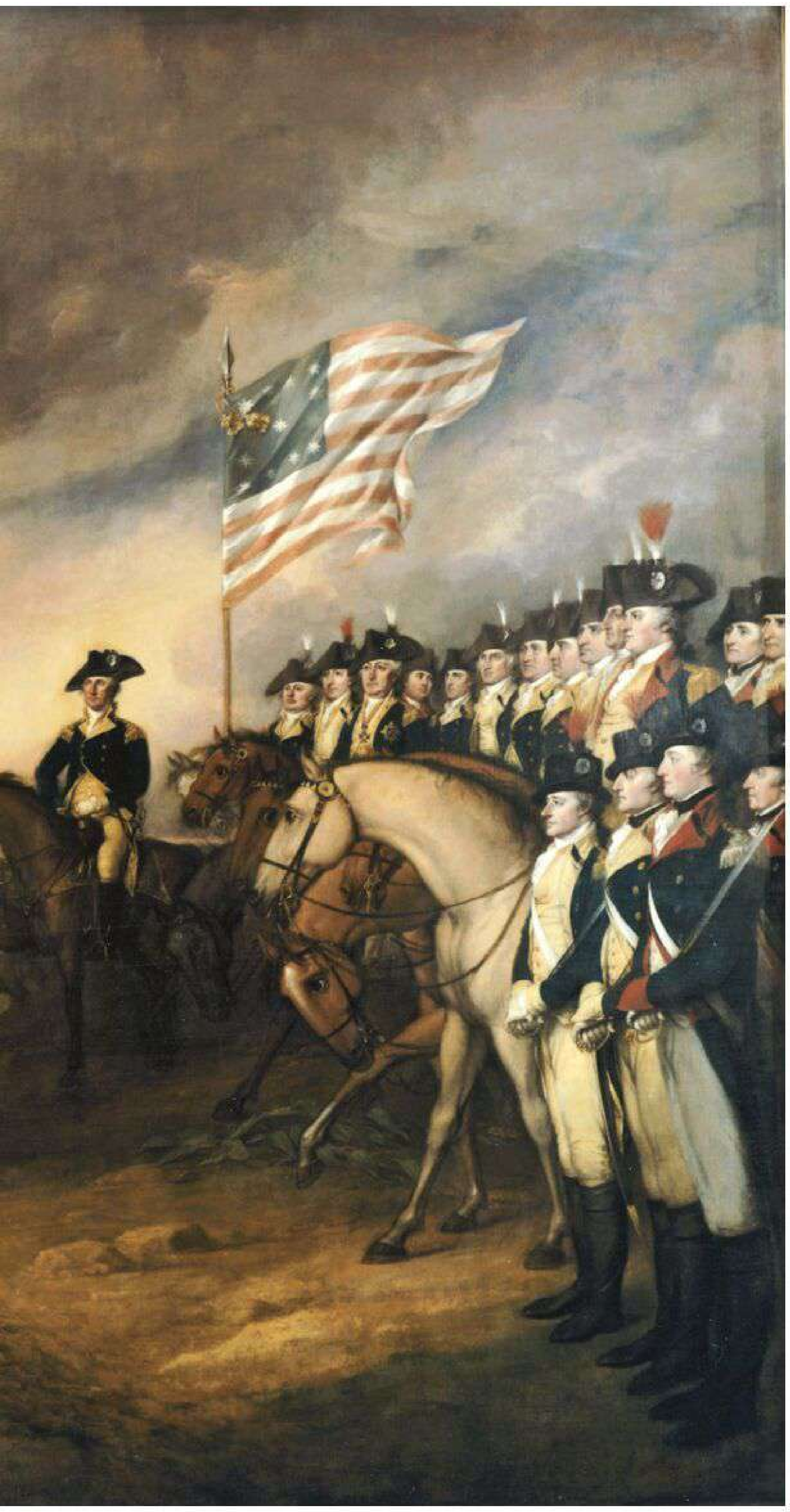
rebelled before, but each and every one had been quelled, the arrival of a strong enough military force usually proving enough to settle any fires of insurrection. When Patriots began attacking British outposts and defying government orders, London sent a slew of regiments to put down the rebellion. Their arrival failed to diminish the uprising and with that, America and Britain were suddenly embroiled in the American War of Independence.

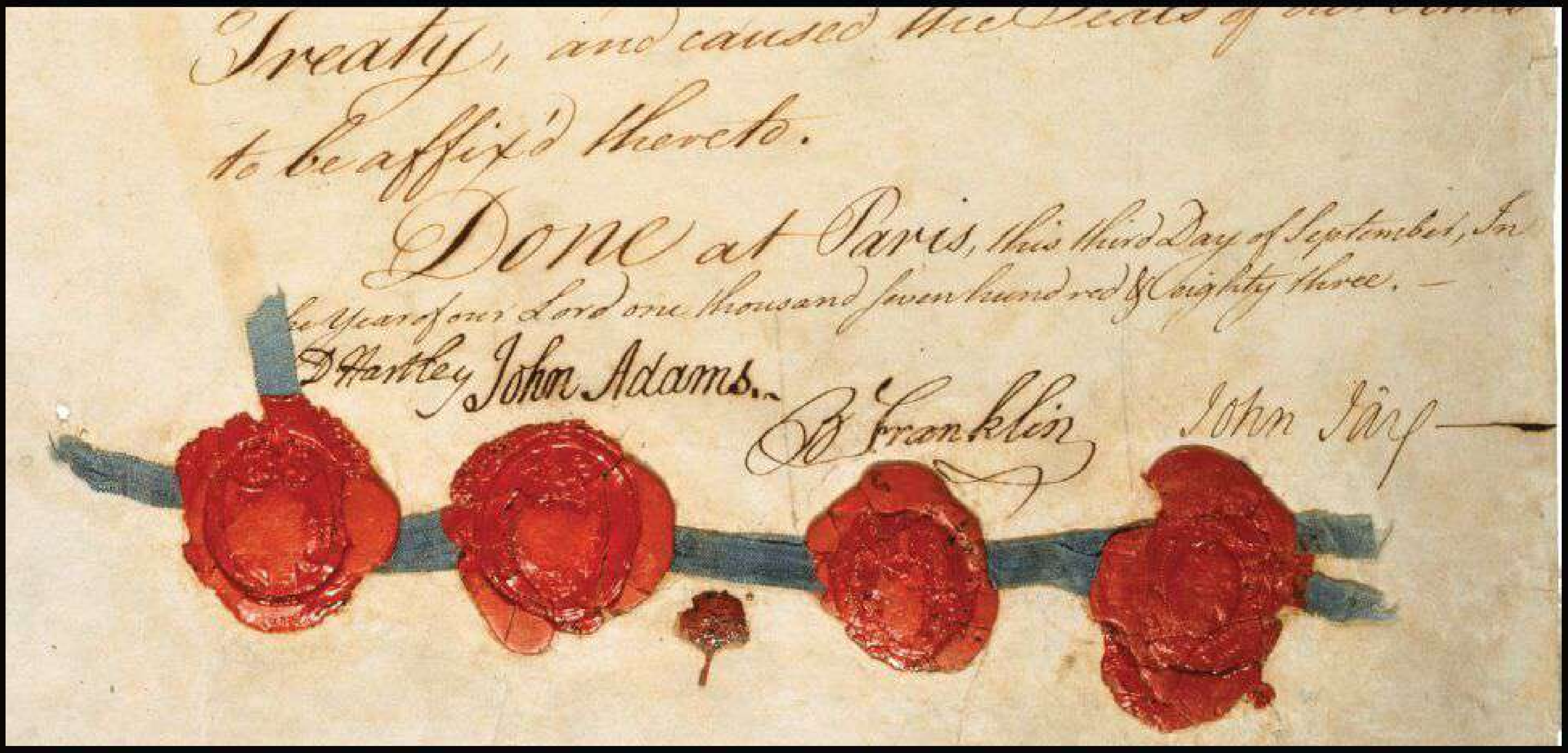
The conflict was the greatest threat the empire had faced since its inception during the late Elizabethan era. While hostilities such as the Seven and Nine Years' Wars were conflicts of conquest and acquisition, the stability of the empire as a whole was never truly at stake. An insurrection of this magnitude, burning away through the veins of its largest and most important collection of colonies, was potentially disastrous.

Following the Spanish War of Succession in 1714, Britain gained Acadia, Minorca, Gibraltar and Newfoundland

Those colonies (Massachusetts Bay, Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Virginia and Rhode Island) formed a considerable proportion of British investment in the former New World and the notion of their loss was simply unthinkable to the British Empire as a whole. By 1776, those colonies had declared themselves the independent United States of America and any notions of this incident fading back into obscurity were soon dismissed. This was war – a war of independence versus imperialism.

When France, still licking its wounds from the embarrassment that was the Seven Years' War, sensed the empire being on an uncharacteristic back foot, it quickly formed an alliance with the newly formed United States and pledged its own troops to defend the American





Treaty, and caused the Seals of

to be affix'd thereto.

Done at Paris, this third Day of September, In

he Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred & eighty three. —

D Hartley John Adams. B Franklin John Jay

Inside the Peace of Paris

The American War of Independence (otherwise known as the American Revolutionary War) saw 13 Crown colonies belonging to Great Britain rebelling against British rule and seeking the right to govern themselves independently. The conflict raged from 1775 to 1783 and a series of military blunders on the part of the British, and the arrival of French troops and ships, swung the war against them and saw the American Patriots race towards victory.

Sensing defeat, the British sought to negotiate an end to hostilities and so representatives from both sides met in Paris, France in April 1782. Much like every facet of the war that had preceded them, the peace negotiations were far from normal and typified the multinational and hyperactive nature of the warring culture in the colonies.

Britain was essentially fighting a war on four fronts against the United States, France, Spain and the Netherlands, and the fighting continued during the treaty talks. For instance, France was keen to see Britain brought low (hence its original involvement in the War of Independence), so the US representatives (John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay) decided to exclude the French from negotiations.

The American sought three main objectives in the negotiations and found the British surprisingly receptive to all three. Firstly, they wanted the empire to recognise all 13 States as fully independent. Secondly, they wanted right of access for American fisherman using the Grand Banks off the coast of Newfoundland and other key fishing sites in Canada. Thirdly, they wanted Britain to cede more territory, thus increasing the size of the nation. Britain eventually agreed to all three and released territories between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi River (which practically doubled the size of the United States).

> "The loss of the Thirteen Colonies was a disaster for the empire, both politically and strategically"

homeland. By entering the fray, France transformed the showdown into a global conflict as Britain found itself defending colonies and dominions against the French, the Spanish and the Dutch.

With the British stretched thin across multiple fronts, the arrival of the French military proved a turning point in the war and a subsequent heavy defeat to Patriot forces at Yorktown in 1781 led the British to negotiate a peace deal with its rebellious colonies. In the Peace of Paris, signed in 1783, Britain was forced to acknowledge the United States' independence; the empire had had one of its largest overseas territories ripped from its bosom.

The loss of the Thirteen Colonies was a disaster for the empire, both politically and strategically, and it proved the first public shaming of the British in nearly two centuries. It rocked the British, both at home and across the colonies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. It placed a significant and lasting question mark over the empire's lasting credibility and marked the end of what we've come to know as the First Empire. For many historians, the loss of the Thirteen Colonies and the defiance of the American Patriots marked a shift in British foreign policy away from the Americas and towards strengthening its presence in Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

Unsurprisingly, the loss of the 13 colonies and the Revolutionary War that followed had a profound impact on the empire financially. The conflict left Britain with a national debt of £250 million, leading to increases in taxes across the empire to try to stabilise a growing pool of debt that had already deepened with Britain's involvement in the Seven Years' War. While this did temporarily restrict the potency of the Royal Navy, the conflict did have an economic upside in the long run. In the years that followed the War of Independence, trade between the two nations began to regenerate, leading some historians to suggest that a free trade setup ultimately proved as beneficial to the empire as a system of colonial control.

The First Empire was a time of change and upheaval for the nation. The New World, once a realm of the unknown, became the catalyst for England's transformation into something far grander. It provided the kingdom with an economic boost that made the Middle Ages seem like a distant memory and made the newly formed Great Britain the most powerful maritime force in the world. Yet that new land came with a sting in the tale, and the fire of independence in the 13 colonies of the Americas taught the empire a valuable lesson about the dangers of allowing a colony to enjoy too much self-governance.

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East India Company

India's corporate overlord

At the peak of its power, the East India Company governed India almost autonomously. How did this band of traders come to rule an entire nation?

Today, even with the political clout of large firms and the see-saw effect their fortunes can have on the economy, it's hard to imagine an individual company having autonomous control of an entire country. Monopoly laws, human rights acts and other inconvenient legislation stands in the way of corporations muscling in on the government. Yet in the 18th century, Britain's East India Company went from being the de facto power in India to assuming official governance of territories that would eventually span most of the Indian subcontinent. To discover how this happened, we have to trace company rule in India back to relatively humble mercantile origins.

By the end of the Tudor dynasty, merchants were seeking to make their fortune further abroad, looking to the lucrative spice trade of what was known at the time as the 'East Indies'. The centuries-old land routes across Asia and through the Middle East to Europe were giving way to shipping lanes, as the Portuguese pioneered revolutionary navigational techniques to cut out the chain of middlemen they relied upon to caravan Eastern luxuries. They reaped huge profits as a result. But the destruction of the Armada in 1588 broke the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly on the spice trade and, exploiting this sudden gap in the market, British and Dutch merchant ships began to make the long and risky journey around the Cape of Good Hope, to the ports of the Arabian Sea and onto parts of Southeast Asia. Charters were granted by Queen Elizabeth I - and later, James I - to British vessels, and a rivalry was established between British merchants and the Dutch East India Company. This sometimes spilled over into violence, with cannon fire exchanged and even entire fleets engaging in naval battles with lives lost on both sides.

The 1773 Tea Act gave the firm a monopoly on tea import and export, but it ultimately led to rebellion in America

This was all just a bit of healthy competition, of course, and in the 17th century, at least, the people of the Mughal Empire that ruled India benefited as much as the foreign traders. They had an equal footing with these Europeans, who embraced their culture and for the most part respected the laws of the land. But the faceless men with their strange accents pulling the strings in their cold ivory towers, thousands of miles from equatorial heat of India, had designs on the subcontinent. They wanted more than to accumulate enormous wealth: they wanted the kind of influence that no amount of money would buy them in their home nation, and events were already unfolding that would see the balance of power shift drastically.

Headquartered in London, the Governor and 'Company of Merchants of London trading with the

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India's corporate overlord

East Indies' was the predecessor to the EIC, and it was as canny and enterprising as its name was incongruous and unimaginative.

Following a naval skirmish it won with the Portuguese in 1612, the company decided it would be in its best interests to secure, once and for all, a territory in India in which it could trade without fear of attack, free of business competition. To that end, a diplomatic mission was ordered by the Crown to India's Emperor Nuruddin Salim Jahangir, which successfully gave the company exclusive residential and trading rights in Surat and other cities on the West Coast of India, in exchange for luxury European goods. Factories and trading posts were established and with both royal patronage and the exclusivity granted by the emperor, the company gained the upper hand against the Portuguese and flourished. Madura then Madras, Bombay and Calcutta; the company spread rapidly across India, merging with rivals as its monopoly began to assert itself. In the decades that followed, any major site of its enterprise became a fortification, as the EIC sought to protect its valuable investments.

> "It could mint its own money, create new territories, hold its own civil and criminal courts and, vitally, create its own armies"

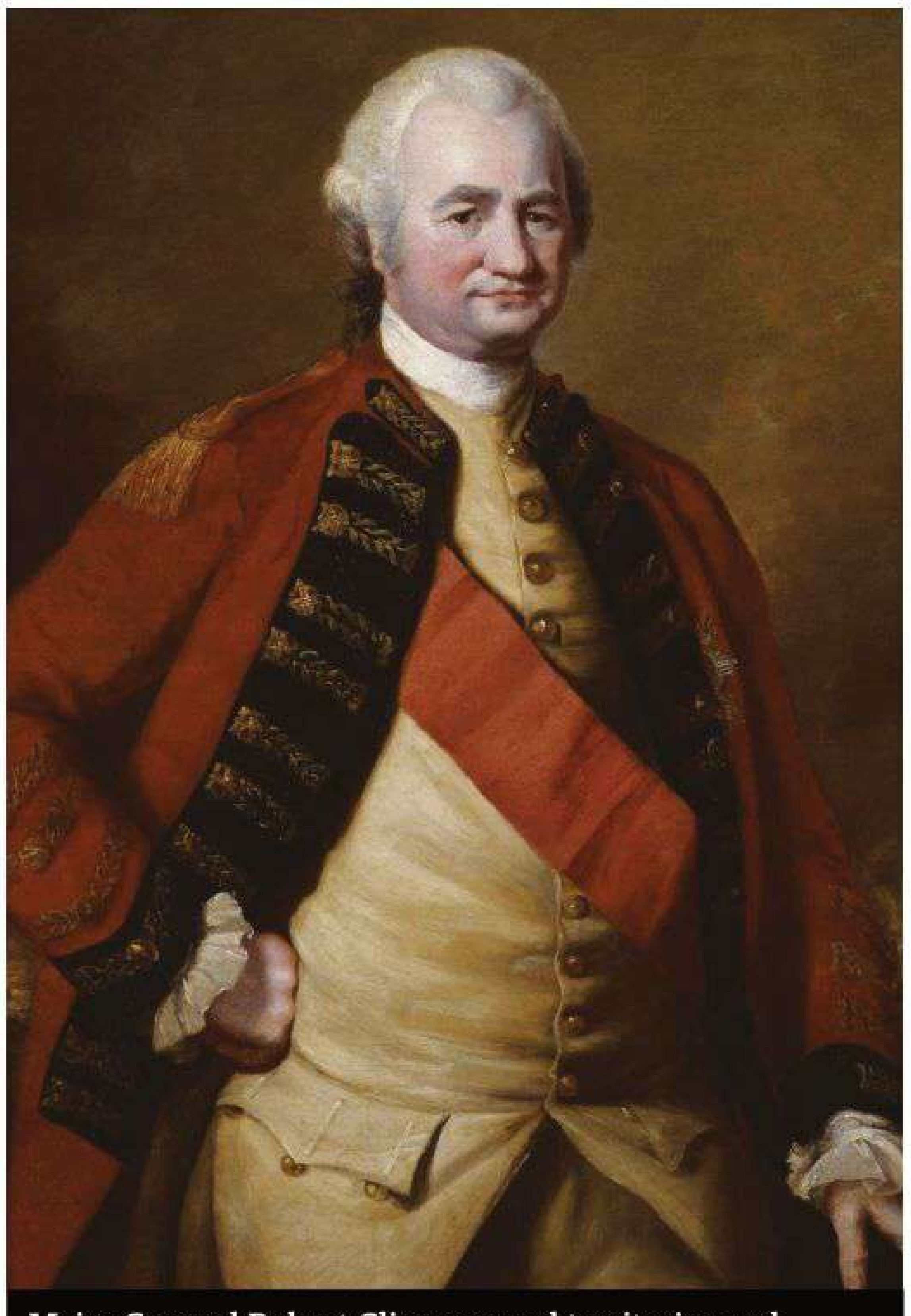
By the beginning of the 18th century, the EIC had been granted rights no other corporation in history can lay claim to: it could mint its own money, create new territories, hold its own civil and criminal courts and, vitally, create its own armies. Although the EIC was still beholden to the British, it was by now practically a governing institution in itself and faced virtually no competition for trade whatsoever. Many second sons of the middle classes left for the East Indies in this century, in an exodus that would see some return with vast riches and a network of political and trade connections to India that, when merged under the banner of the EIC, gave them some clout in the British Parliament.

> The Hindi word 'Loot', which is translated as 'plunder', entered the English language in the 18th century

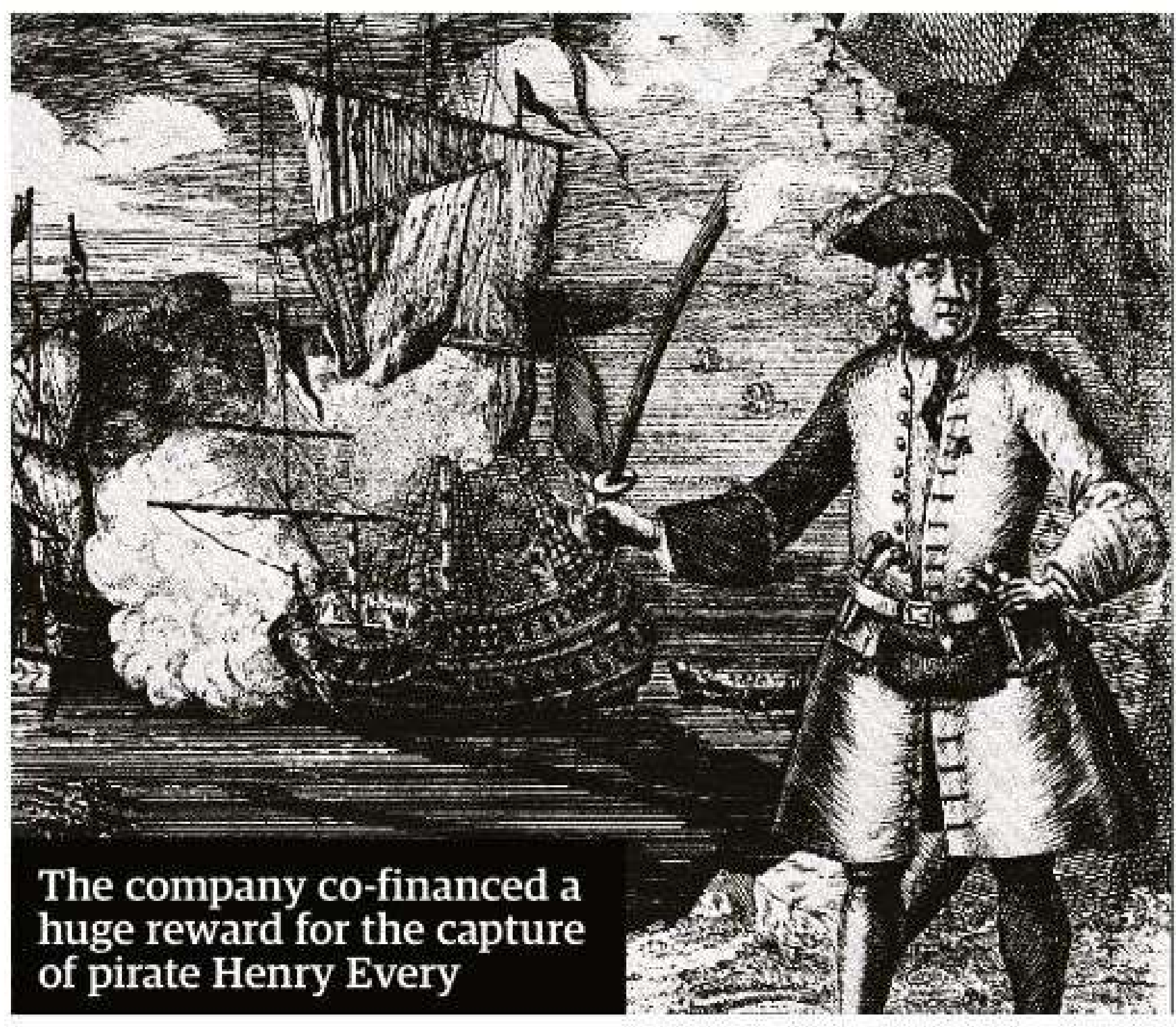
Conversely, the Mughal Empire's fortunes were ailing. From 1707 onwards, the emperor's rule was to be threatened by provincial princes who themselves had profited and gained power through trade with the EIC and were revolting. This did not happen in a vacuum and it only takes small stretch of the imagination to see how the EIC could have stirred the pot to its advantage. It already had the administration in place, a military presence and the right to govern handed over by the Crown. Ostensibly, the EIC was arbitrating for the emperor and his subjects, but in reality it was capitalising on India's civil unrest to seize even more territory and built upon its mighty power base.

It's the kind of exploitation that's only made completely transparent with centuries-long hindsight.

By the time the Mughal dynasty had decayed to that point that and the emperor was executed and local Indian states seized power, India accounted for 15 per cent of British imports, practically all



Major General Robert Clive secured territories and profits for the company in the mid-18th century. He was largely responsible for the crippling taxes and atrocities that led to the Bengal Famine



The company co-financed a huge reward for the capture of pirate Henry Every

Defining moment

Pirates attack a Mughal convoy 1695

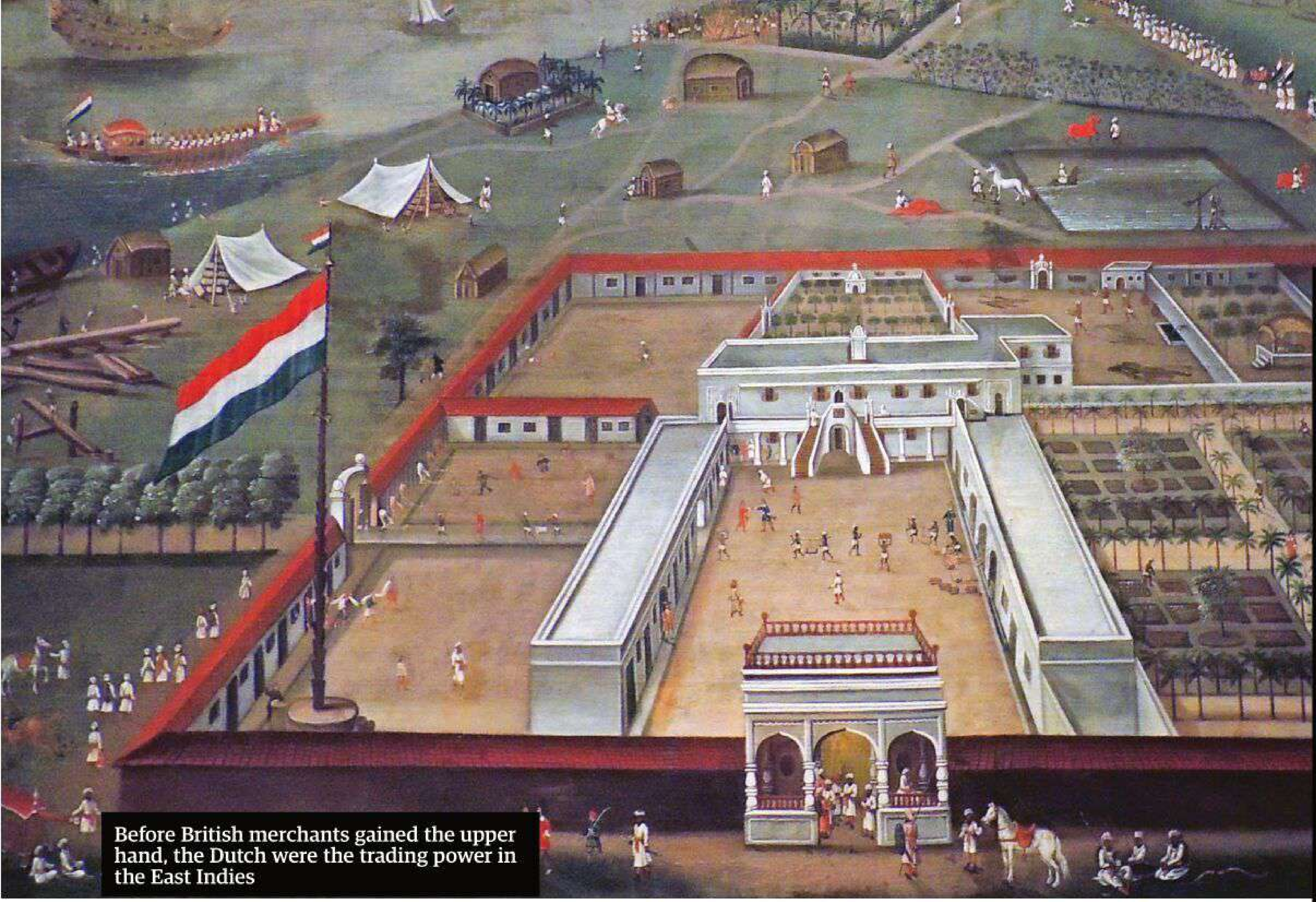
Seeing great potential in the Indian fleet, Henry Every and five other pirate captains conspire to attack the convoy heading to Mocha and loot the treasure ship Ganj-i-Sawai. One by one, they pick off parts of the Indian fleet with ease until they reach the Ganj-i-Sawai and its escort, defeating and taking up to £600,000 in gold and silver – the biggest haul ever seized by pirates.

Naturally, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb is not happy. He blames the British for their countrymen's actions and holds the EIC personally responsible. Four of the company's factories are attacked and taken by the emperor. So, to mollify the ruler, a £1,000 bounty is placed on Every's head and he is made exempt from any possible royal pardon or amnesty.

Timeline

1588

- **India expedition** The first of three merchant ships are given permission by Elizabeth I to sail around the South African peninsula to India on a trading mission. **1588**
- **Royal charter granted** With some success and profits gained from their venture to the East Indies, the Queen grants a royal charter to James Lancaster and the newly formed EIC that gives it a monopoly on trade to Britain from India. **1600**
- **Exclusive rights** A diplomatic mission by the British Crown to the emperor results in a coup for the EIC, as it is given exclusive rights to trade and reside in Surat. **1615**
- **Greater powers** King Charles II passes a series of acts that grant the company powers similar to those of a state government, including the right to acquire territory. **1670**
- **Breakaway enterprise** The great wealth and influence EIC officers enjoy in India enables them to return home as powerful men. They lobby in Parliament to allow any firm to trade with India and a rival company is formed. **1694**
- **Tax exempt** The Mughal emperor grants the company a 'firman' – a royal decree that exempts it from paying customs duties in Bengal. **1717**
- **Looting Bengal** By treachery, bribes and other villainy, India's commander-in-chief Robert Clive sees Bengal's treasury drained into the company's coffers. He takes a big cut. **1757**


Before British merchants gained the upper hand, the Dutch were the trading power in the East Indies

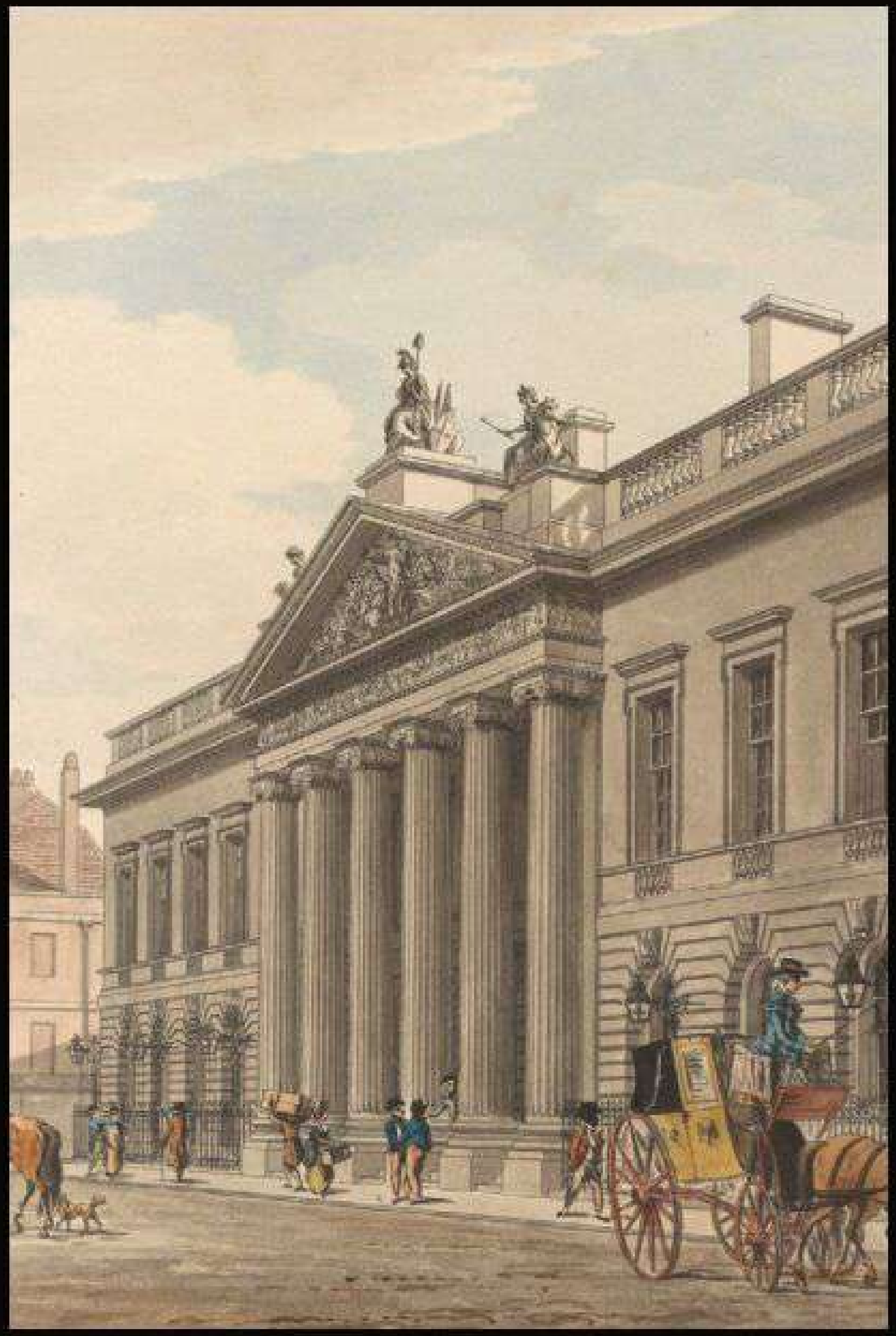
of which could trace its journey through the EIC. Although it recognised the company's role in boosting Britain's economy, the UK government was reluctant to grant the company any more power than it already had by giving it more autonomy, and thus more power from its lobby in Britain. It's entirely conceivable that Parliament might have seen a threat to its own power in the home nation.

However, trouble in Europe at this time would weigh once more in the company's favour. Hostilities between Britain and France were heightened and, fearing war was on the horizon, Britain looked to the EIC for funds. A massive sum of £1 million was granted to the treasury in exchange for an extended deadline of exclusive trade in India. This wasn't the first time that Britain had been in the pocket of the EIC, but as civil war brewed in Britain's North American colonies, the company, its shareholders and employees continued to enjoy a privileged existence in India, unfettered by either of the respective ruling powers. In less than a century, the EIC had gone from a friendly company seeking trade opportunities for India's mutual benefit, to a foreign overlord with large private armies that had the capability and will to take what it wanted.

Although Parliament finally passed an act that would curtail the rampant company's powers in India, it is mercenary men like Robert Clive, commander-in-chief of British India, who characterise this morally bankrupt period in the EIC's history. He won new territories and great wealth for the company (and for himself) at the cost of many Indian lives and the economy of the nation. 'Rape' is not too strong a word to use when describing what he did to the country for personal gain and ambition, under the banner of liberation and civilisation. Parliament was forced to step in.

Passing the Regulating Act of 1773 was the first step taken. It effectively made any territory taken by Crown subjects (like the EIC), Crown territory. Further acts of Parliament would follow, some of which were more successful at reining in the burgeoning company than others, but from this point onwards Britain would take a much firmer hand with its wayward child abroad.

> The EIC's military force had grown dramatically to an army of over 20,000 by the 1760s



Feast and Bengal famine

Despite its huge incomes and rights to taxation, by 1768 the EIC had overstretched its borders and was spending a huge amount of money on administration and military. That year, some of the food crops in its Bengal territories failed. This wasn't a problem until it was compounded by drought upon drought in the following years, and the indigenous farmers began to suffer as starvation became rife among the population. Under the command of Robert Clive, the company did nothing. Worse, the officers of the EIC were completely unsympathetic to the plight of the people. As a corporation, profit – not the people – was its main concern. Having raised land tax to five times its original level, it announced a further ten per cent increase at a time when farmers were crippled with hunger. The amount of food available had been reduced by the EIC clearing land set aside for food crops to make way for more profitable opium poppies. A third of the population of Bengal starved to death as a result, pastures were left to the wilds, and large parts of its territories became depopulated.

© Alamy

Defining moment

Drug traffickers 1773

Opium is big business for the EIC, but its exports to China have put the company at loggerheads with the Chinese. Aware of the detrimental effect widespread opium use is having on the Chinese economy as workers idle their hours away, strung out in EIC-supplied opium dens, the Qing dynasty has tightened regulation and eventually prohibits opium imports. This does not stop the EIC, however. It prohibits licensing of opium farmers and private opium cultivation in India, giving itself a monopoly on the trade. With tight control on production, the company is able to ensure opium grown in Bengal and sold in Calcutta will make its way to the lucrative Chinese black market anyway.

Brought to heel
After numerous attempts by Parliament to control this corporate monster, the Act of 1786 defines the boundary of Crown and company, making the EIC more accountable for its actions.
1786

Wings clipped
By the early 19th century, the EIC is a governing body in everything but name. The Government of India Act hands its powers to Britain, and India falls under the rule of Parliament.
1833

1873

Dissolution
After the 1857 India rebellion (for which the EIC is blamed), the company is wholly nationalised, until it is formally dissolved with a final dividend payment made to its investors.
1873

Ten trading treasures

A wealth of resources were traded and imported by the empire – not all without controversy

01 Slaves

British involvement in the slave trade began in 1564, when naval commander John Hawkins went on a slaving voyage to Africa. To begin with, English traders only supplied slaves to Spanish and Portuguese colonists in America, but as British settlements grew, they began supplying British colonies. Between Hawkins's first voyage and the abolition of slavery in 1807, about 3.4 million slaves were transported on British ships.

02 Sugar

Sugar had been brought back to Europe by Crusaders in the 12th century, after they encountered caravans in the Holy Land selling 'sweet salt'. However, it was Christopher Colombus who took the first sugarcane cuttings to the New World, where the sugar industry really took off. Sugar plantations were established throughout the Caribbean, and despite a brief dip in popularity due to health concerns associated with it, the rise of the slave trade re-established sugar as a staple part of the English diet.

03 Wheat

Surprisingly, wheat – which could be grown in Britain – was one of the biggest imports from the British Empire. As Britain industrialised and urbanised, it began importing grains that had previously been abundant on the domestic market. The Corn Laws of the early 19th century imposed restrictions and tariffs on imported grain, but these were repealed in 1846 following the Irish famine. In 1904, India sent more wheat to Britain than any other country, surpassing agricultural giants like Canada and Australia.

04 Cocoa

After the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, their beloved chocolate was imported to Europe, where it quickly became a court favourite. As the demand for chocolate rose, the British established more and more cocoa plantations in the Carribean and Central America, with slaves imported to labour on them. In the late 19th century, cocoa tree seedlings were smuggled into the Gold Coast and a small cocoa farm was established. By 1915, the Gold Coast and Nigeria – another British territory – accounted for almost one-quarter of global cocoa production.

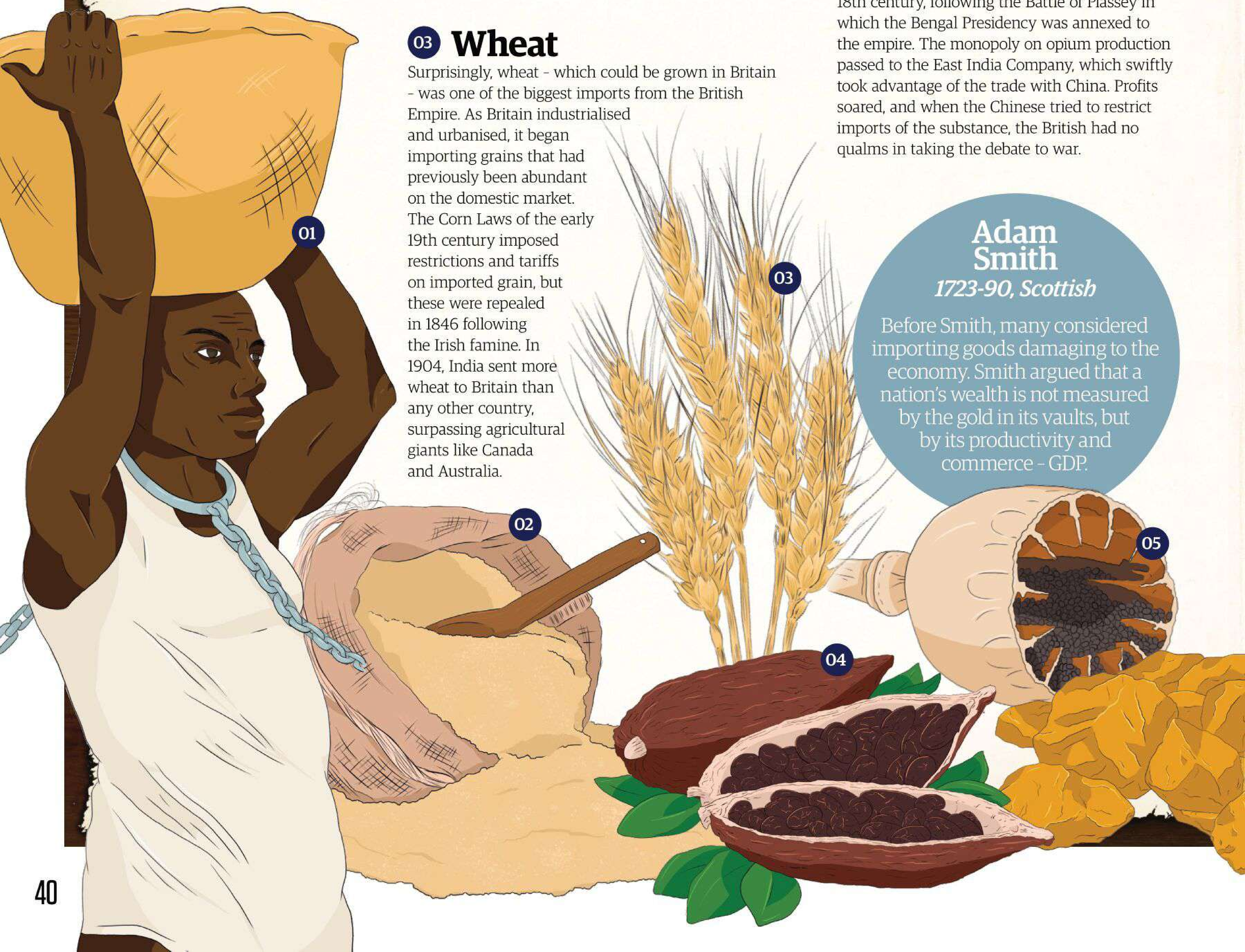
05 Opium

Opium has had a huge impact on British culture, and some of its greatest works of literature were produced under the influence of this narcotic. The drug became popular during the 18th century, following the Battle of Plassey in which the Bengal Presidency was annexed to the empire. The monopoly on opium production passed to the East India Company, which swiftly took advantage of the trade with China. Profits soared, and when the Chinese tried to restrict imports of the substance, the British had no qualms in taking the debate to war.

Adam Smith

1723-90, Scottish

Before Smith, many considered importing goods damaging to the economy. Smith argued that a nation's wealth is not measured by the gold in its vaults, but by its productivity and commerce – GDP.



Robert Clive

1725-74, English

Charged with securing India for the Crown and turning it into a money-making machine, Clive was criticised for overseeing the forced cultivation of crops like opium, leading to famine.

06 Cotton

Calico and chintz – types of cotton fabric – were imported from India and became popular among the poor. A growing demand for washable and colourful materials led to cotton overtaking wool in popularity. By the 18th century, it began to threaten British manufacturers, so the Calico Acts were passed to ban imports. These were repealed in 1774 when the invention of machines like the spinning jenny allowed the British to compete with Eastern fabrics. By 1806, cotton goods accounted for 43 per cent of Britain's exports.

07 Gold

It's still contested why Africa went from being one of the least colonised continents to one of the most, and in such a short space of time, but one of the reasons could well be to do with gold. Europeans had been trading in Western Africa since the 15th century after they discovered its richness in natural resources – including gold – but in 1867, the British established the Gold Coast colony by purchasing and seizing land. Along with the deposits that had been found in Australia and New Zealand, gold became a major export of the British Empire.

08 Tobacco

Before the dangers of tobacco were exposed, it was a major money maker for the empire. Tobacco had been smoked by Native American tribes for centuries before Hernandez de Boncalo, a Spanish chronicler, brought back seeds in 1559. When the English began colonising the Americas from the early 1600s, they too saw the commercial opportunities the tobacco trade posed. By 1650, England imported about 10 million pounds of it, worth roughly £12 million in the colonies but several times that in England.

09 Tea

The first mention of tea in English was in a letter from an East India Company employee in 1615 asking a merchant for "the best sort of chaw". It gained a popularity boost in England when Catherine of Braganza, a Portuguese royal who favoured the infusion, married Charles II, but it remained expensive until the 18th century. Smuggling brought tea to the masses, and the government eventually decided to eradicate tax on it.

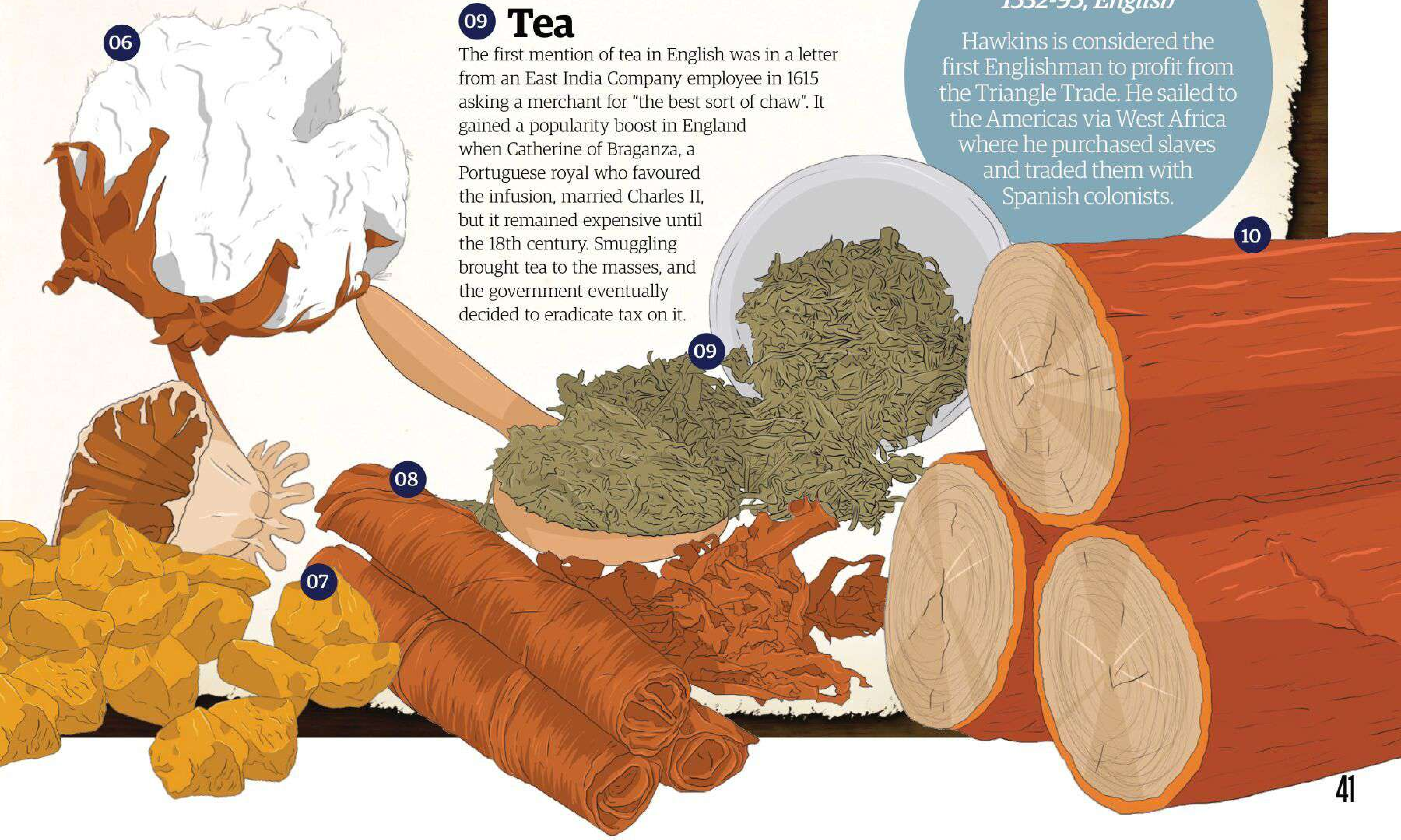
10 Timber

As the Industrial Revolution dawned, the price of timber shot up as supplies in Britain began to run low. Over time, coal replaced wood as fuel and brick became the main construction material, but in shipbuilding timber still reigned supreme. As trees take decades to grow, densely populated nations like Britain benefited much more from growing crops or grazing animals, so timber was instead imported from the Baltics. However, growing tensions in Europe forced Britain to rethink its dependency on Baltic timber, and throughout the 1700s and 1800s, initiatives were launched to try to encourage imports from colonial North America, but these failed to have an impact.

John Hawkins

1532-95, English

Hawkins is considered the first Englishman to profit from the Triangle Trade. He sailed to the Americas via West Africa where he purchased slaves and traded them with Spanish colonists.



EMPIRE BUILDING

Understand the actions taken in pursuit of imperial supremacy - and led to unfaltering British dominance

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Get to grips with the developing status of Britain's international reach

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Understand the events that solidified the might and power of a nation

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Find out what sent explorers and discoverers East - along with Britain's convicts

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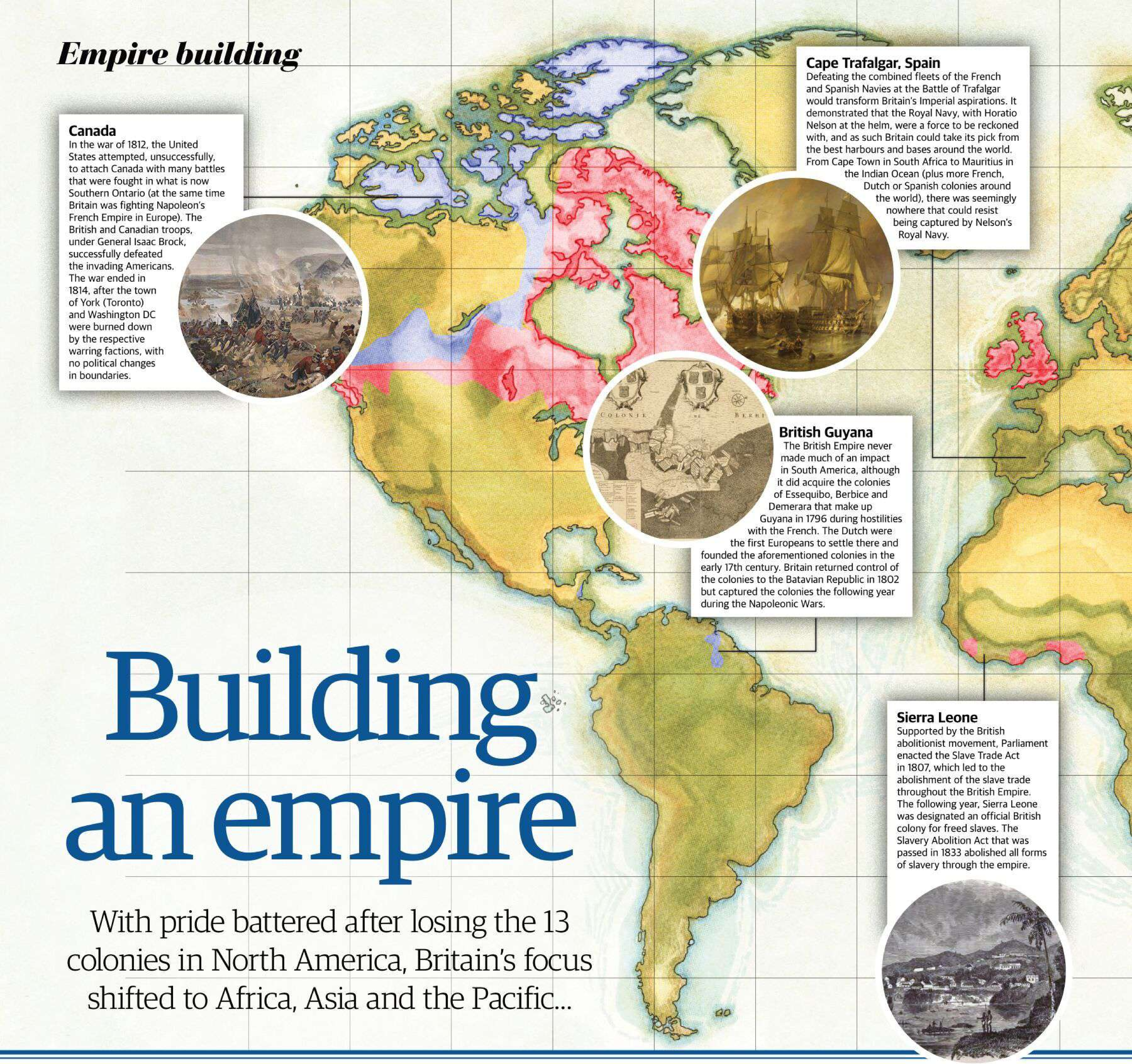
Building an empire

With pride battered after losing the 13 colonies in North America, Britain's focus shifted to Africa, Asia and the Pacific…



Canada
In the war of 1812, the United States attempted, unsuccessfully, to attach Canada with many battles that were fought in what is now Southern Ontario (at the same time Britain was fighting Napoleon's French Empire in Europe). The British and Canadian troops, under General Isaac Brock, successfully defeated the invading Americans. The war ended in 1814, after the town of York (Toronto) and Washington DC were burned down by the respective warring factions, with no political changes in boundaries.

Cape Trafalgar, Spain
Defeating the combined fleets of the French and Spanish Navies at the Battle of Trafalgar would transform Britain's Imperial aspirations. It demonstrated that the Royal Navy, with Horatio Nelson at the helm, were a force to be reckoned with, and as such Britain could take its pick from the best harbours and bases around the world. From Cape Town in South Africa to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean (plus more French, Dutch or Spanish colonies around the world), there was seemingly nowhere that could resist being captured by Nelson's Royal Navy.

British Guyana
The British Empire never made much of an impact in South America, although it did acquire the colonies of Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara that make up Guyana in 1796 during hostilities with the French. The Dutch were the first Europeans to settle there and founded the aforementioned colonies in the early 17th century. Britain returned control of the colonies to the Batavian Republic in 1802 but captured the colonies the following year during the Napoleonic Wars.

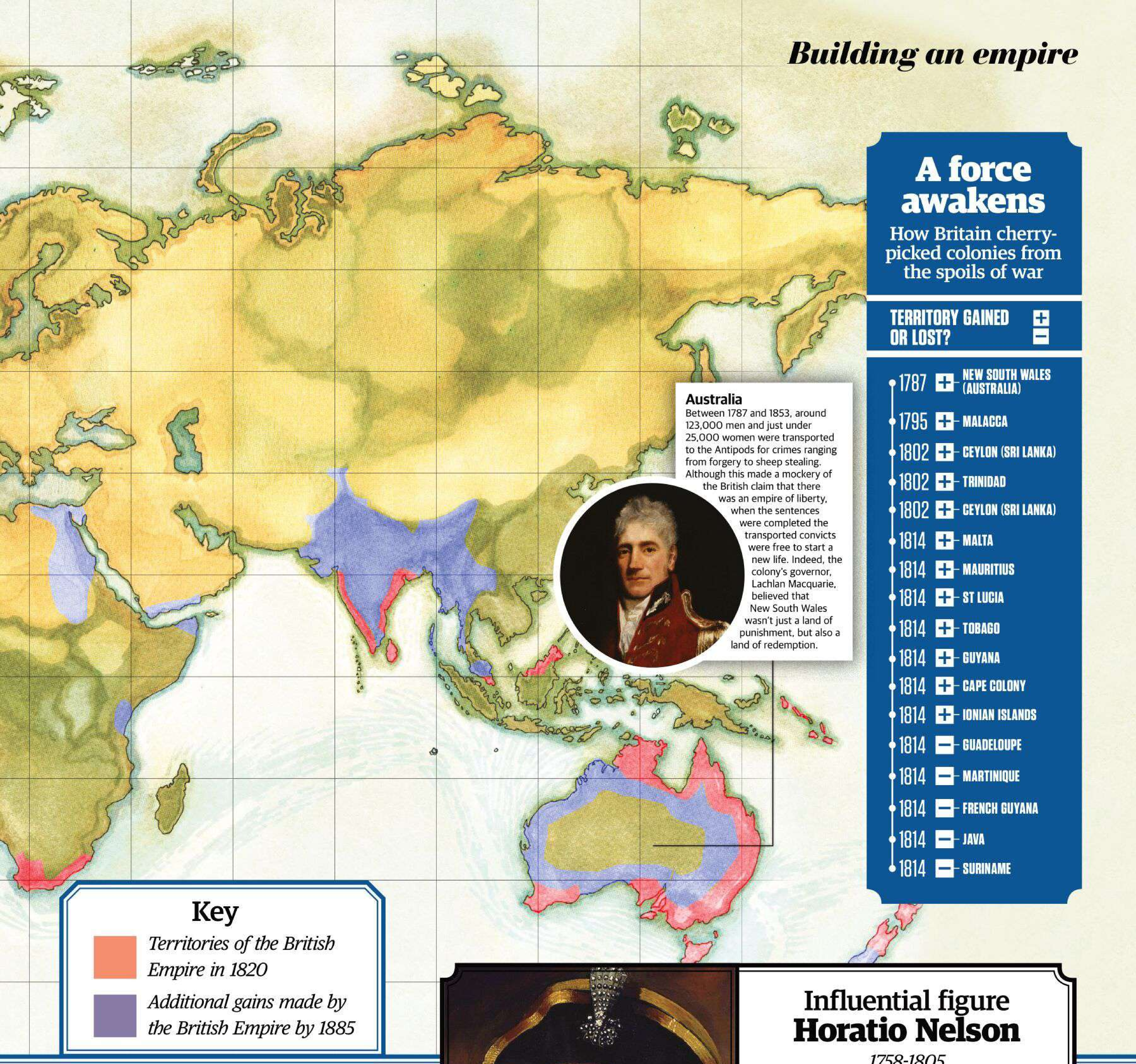
Sierra Leone
Supported by the British abolitionist movement, Parliament enacted the Slave Trade Act in 1807, which led to the abolishment of the slave trade throughout the British Empire. The following year, Sierra Leone was designated an official British colony for freed slaves. The Slavery Abolition Act that was passed in 1833 abolished all forms of slavery through the empire.

At its height between the late-16th century and the early-18th century, the British Empire was the in history and the world's most formidable superpower. However, its supremacy took a hit after the American War of Independence when 13 of the empire's colonies in North America declared independence, causing Britain to lose some of its oldest and most heavily populated colonies. While this could have heralded the beginning of the end for the British Empire, instead the loss of the 13 colonies spurred on a whole new phase of British colonial expansion even further afield. On the one hand half a continent had been lost, but in the wake of that breakaway, Britain turned its attention towards Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Whereas the British had been attracted to Asia by trade and to America by land, Australia represented an entirely different proposition due to its barren landscape and remote location. Although the western coast of Australia had been discovered by the Dutch explorer Williem Jansz in 1606 (and later named New Holland), it was never colonised. So when James Cook discovered the eastern coast of New South Wales while on a scientific voyage to the South Pacific Ocean, he claimed it for Britain and declared to be the ideal dumping ground for British criminals.

The transportation of convicts to British colonies had been going on, informally, since the early 1600s, but did not become a formal part of the British penal system until 1717 as an alternative to hanging or having to build English prisons to contain them. With the American colonies now lost, alternative measures had to be taken and the transporting of prisoners to Australia essentially killed two birds with one stone. It not only relieved the British prisons of extra bodies, it also led to New South Wales being colonised, placing it firmly under British ownership.

Another significant development in the history of the British Empire occurred during the early part



Australia
Between 1787 and 1853, around 123,000 men and just under 25,000 women were transported to the Antipods for crimes ranging from forgery to sheep stealing. Although this made a mockery of the British claim that there was an empire of liberty, when the sentences were completed the transported convicts were free to start a new life. Indeed, the colony's governor, Lachlan Macquarie, believed that New South Wales wasn't just a land of punishment, but also a land of redemption.

Key

- 🟥 *Territories of the British Empire in 1820*
- 🟪 *Additional gains made by the British Empire by 1885*

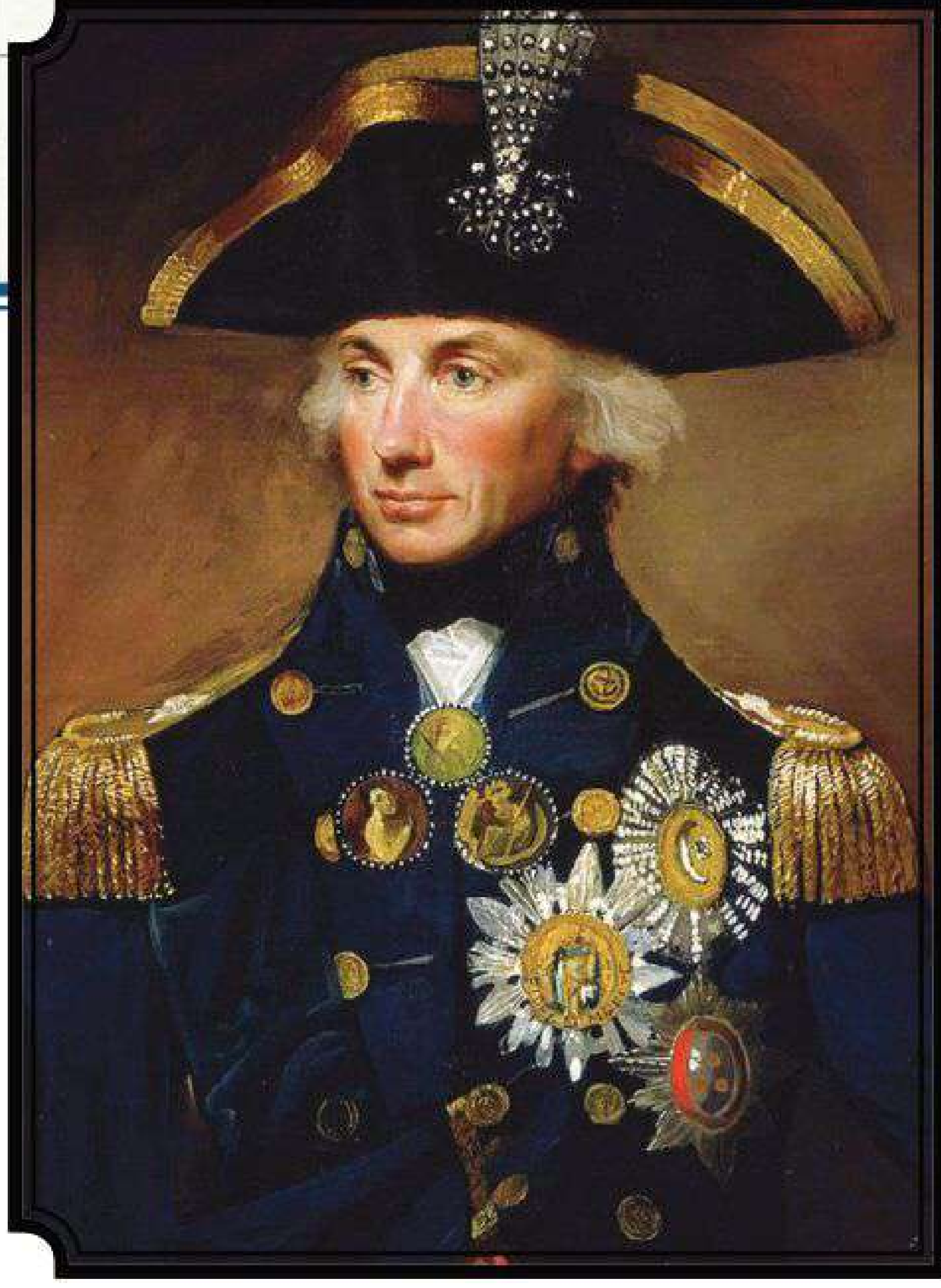
A force awakens

How Britain cherry-picked colonies from the spoils of war

TERRITORY GAINED OR LOST? + −

1787	+	NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA)
1795	+	MALACCA
1802	+	CEYLON (SRI LANKA)
1802	+	TRINIDAD
1802	+	CEYLON (SRI LANKA)
1814	+	MALTA
1814	+	MAURITIUS
1814	+	ST LUCIA
1814	+	TOBAGO
1814	+	GUYANA
1814	+	CAPE COLONY
1814	+	IONIAN ISLANDS
1814	−	GUADELOUPE
1814	−	MARTINIQUE
1814	−	FRENCH GUYANA
1814	−	JAVA
1814	−	SURINAME

of the 19th century with the Napoleonic wars. With Napoleon's armies having already overrun many countries in Europe, Britain invested heavily in the resources required to win the wars – and it proved successful with a decisive victory over a Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in 1805. Britain attacked and occupied numerous overseas colonies during the wars, including those of the Netherlands. Ultimately the Ionian Islands, Malta, Mauritius, St Luca and Tobago from France, and Trinidad, Guyana and the Cape Colony from Spain were all gained. In 1807, Britain also abolished slavery in the empire, with Sierra Leone becoming a designated British colony for free slaves the following year.



Influential figure
Horatio Nelson

1758-1805

The Battle of Trafalgar (fought during the War of the Third Coalition, and one of the Napoleonic Wars) demonstrated that Nelson was as tactically astute on water as Napoleon was on the land, his Navy of ships cutting through the Franco-Spanish fleet like a scolding cannon ball through sodden wood. The 27 ships of the fleet led by Admiral Nelson aboard the HMS Victory defeated the 33 French and Spanish ships in the Atlantic off the southwest coast of Spain with apparent ease (the Franco-Spanish fleet reportedly lost 22 ships before an English vessel was sunk), although it would ultimately cost Nelson his life. The admiral became an instant hero by dying at the moment of his greatest victory, but few at the time could have imagined how important this naval victory would prove to be, with Britain's control of the seas going unchallenged for the rest of the century.

Nelson & the Battle of Trafalgar

For Britain, Trafalgar was the last hope against a French invasion, but for Nelson, it was the final battle against a far more fearsome foe

Just before noon on 21 October 1805, Admiral Viscount Horatio Nelson stood aboard the deck of his flagship HMS Victory. A light westerly wind whistled through the air, and in the distance he could see the frigates of the Franco-Spanish fleet. For weeks he had bided his time, patiently waiting, reviewing tactics and planning every action down to the finest detail. Now, finally the hour had come, and he signalled for his fleet to begin the attack. In less than five hours, he would experience a victory that would define his life, and a loss that would end it.

Today Nelson is remembered as one of Britain's greatest heroes – a warrior, a commander and a victor. However, when he entered this world on 29 September 1758, the sixth of 11 children, he was a sickly baby. His parents were so fearful that he would not survive that they had him baptised early. This occurrence would begin a lifelong tradition of battling and succeeding against the odds.

The Nelson family were not unknown, but they certainly weren't particularly wealthy and they had to exploit their connections to ensure a steady future for their children. Nelson's mother, Catherine Suckling, was a distant relative of Robert Walpole, first prime minister of Great Britain. However, tragically, Nelson's mother died when the boy was just nine. It was to be his maternal uncle who would have the biggest influence on his life, as aged just 12, Nelson began his naval career serving under his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, on the HMS Raisonnable.

When Nelson joined the navy, it was in the lowest ranks. However, perhaps the result of being a sixth child in a large family, he sought glory above all else. This quest to make a name for himself and achieve renown fuelled a work ethic that soon impressed his superiors and saw him ascend through the ranks at a rapid rate. This was particularly impressive for a boy who suffered from extreme sea-sickness.

> Despite losing his right eye during a campaign in Corsica, Nelson never wore an eye patch

After crossing the Atlantic several times, Nelson, eager to experience as much as possible, obtained a position on HMS Carcass. The ship was set on an expedition across the Arctic to find the fabled

“Today Nelson is remembered as one of Britain’s greatest heroes – a warrior, a commander and a victor”

Life in Nelson's Navy

Serving under Nelson, many 19th-century sailors faced graver dangers than the enemy

Work & warfare

Sailors usually started their careers as boys, but during wartime the navy needed an additional 60,000 men for the fleet, and this could include those who had never gone to sea. The skilled work was carried out by about 20 per cent of the crew, while the rest dealt with heavy hauling.

Food & drink

Food on board was of varying quality, and the meat was salted and placed in barrels for preservation. Although much of the food was bland and dry, sailors received regular meals. They were entitled to a gallon of beer each day and drunkenness on board was a big problem in the navy.

Discipline & punishment

Discipline on board ships was harsh, but it was equally harsh on land. The rules on a ship, known as the Articles of War, declared that men could be hung for mutiny, treason, desertion or sodomy. Lesser forms of punishment were starting, running the gauntlet and flogging.

Health & hygiene

With men living in such cramped, damp conditions, disease was rampant, with 50 per cent of all Royal Navy deaths in 1810 attributed to it. Surgery was far from advanced, with amputations used for any injured limbs, and there are accounts of tubs filled with severed body parts during battles.

Pay & benefits

Poverty forced many men to sea, and on top of their annual salary, the riches gained from capture of an enemy vessel were divided among the men based on rank. Captains enjoyed three-eighths of the reward, however, Nelson often complained about his lack of prize money as he was posted away from bountiful areas.

northwest passage to India. This was a very perilous mission, and was ultimately unsuccessful, with the ship forced to turn back. However, along the way, an eager 15-year-old Nelson decided to pursue a polar bear across the ice. Young, intrepid and fearless, thanks to a sudden crack in the ice separating the beast from Nelson, the headstrong boy was granted another last minute escape from likely death.

The eager young sailor saw his first action when he was stationed aboard Seahorse in the East Indies. It was only a brief exchange of volleys, but Nelson was gaining experience and watching carefully. He was a fast learner and had a quick mind for naval tactics, so when a case of malaria caused him to be discharged, it affected him badly. While recovering, Nelson faced another battle, but this time with depression. For someone so determined to make a name for themselves, coming so close to a death of relative obscurity was a difficult pill to swallow. However, his proud, optimistic spirit won through, and fuelled by patriotism and a renewed sense of determination, Nelson passed the lieutenant exam and set sail again, this time into the perilous heart of the American War of Independence.

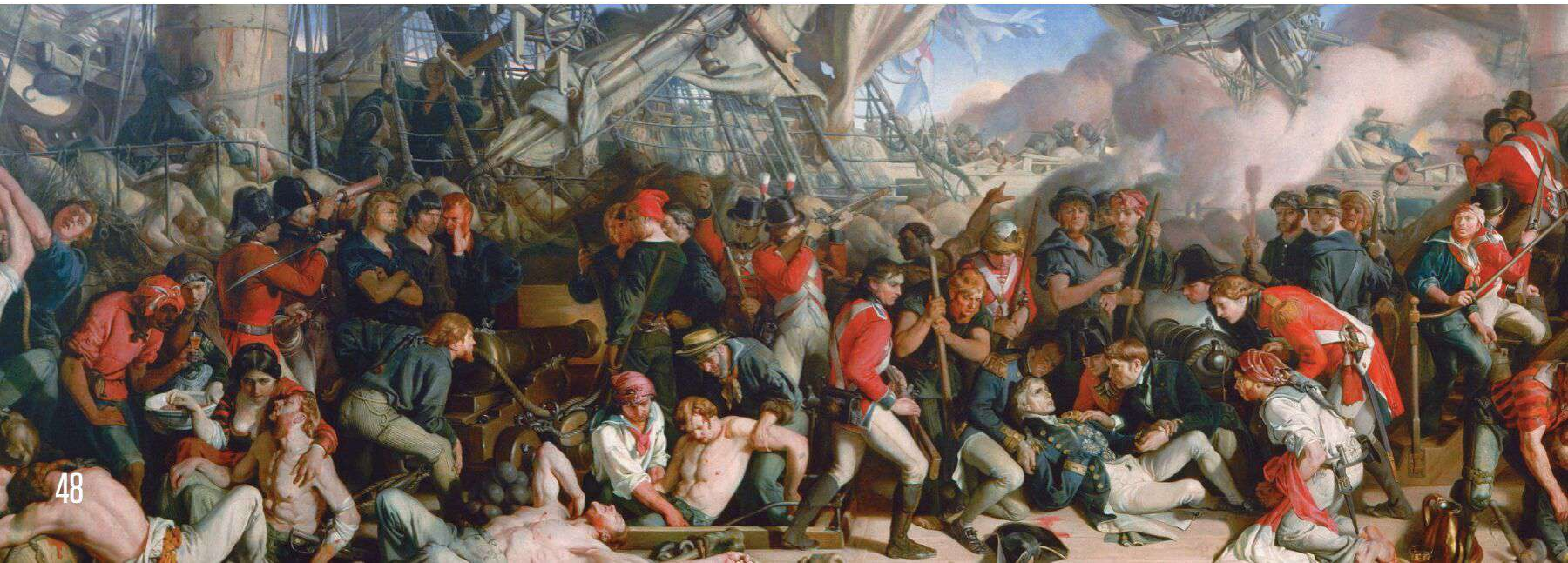
> "Nelson had never desired a long, comfortable life; he was a master of the seas and a seeker of adventure"

Aged just 20, Nelson was given command of a frigate and experienced his first taste of command, attacking Spanish settlements in Nicaragua. The operation was a success, and Nelson was commended for his quick thinking and valiant actions. However, this success did not last, as almost the entire British force was struck down with yellow fever. Nelson himself barely recovered with his life, and when he returned to sea in 1784, it was not to a life of daring battles and valiant successes. Instead Nelson's role was to enforce the Navigation Act. He made many enemies, and the loneliness of command saw him sink back into despair and depression. When he returned home, he found himself unpopular with his kinsmen, without any appointment, and unemployed for five long years.

Nelson was battered and bruised, but he was not defeated. His marriage to the widow Frances Nisbet, who had a five-year-old son, revitalised a man who was already far older than his 29 years. Meanwhile, overseas, events were happening that would affect the path his life would take forever. The people of France were rebelling, the king had been killed, the world was watching and finally, Nelson was given a ship: the 64-gun Agamemnon.

At last things in Nelson's life were looking up – he had a loving wife at home, a fast powerful ship under his command, and an able crew who listened and followed his orders. This dynamic life suited Nelson, and in it he began to flourish. The enthusiastic young man was still there, but another side was emerging, a capable commander and flashes of genius. It was during this period, while defending the port of Toulon, that Nelson first crossed swords with a 24-year-old French Artillery officer by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte.

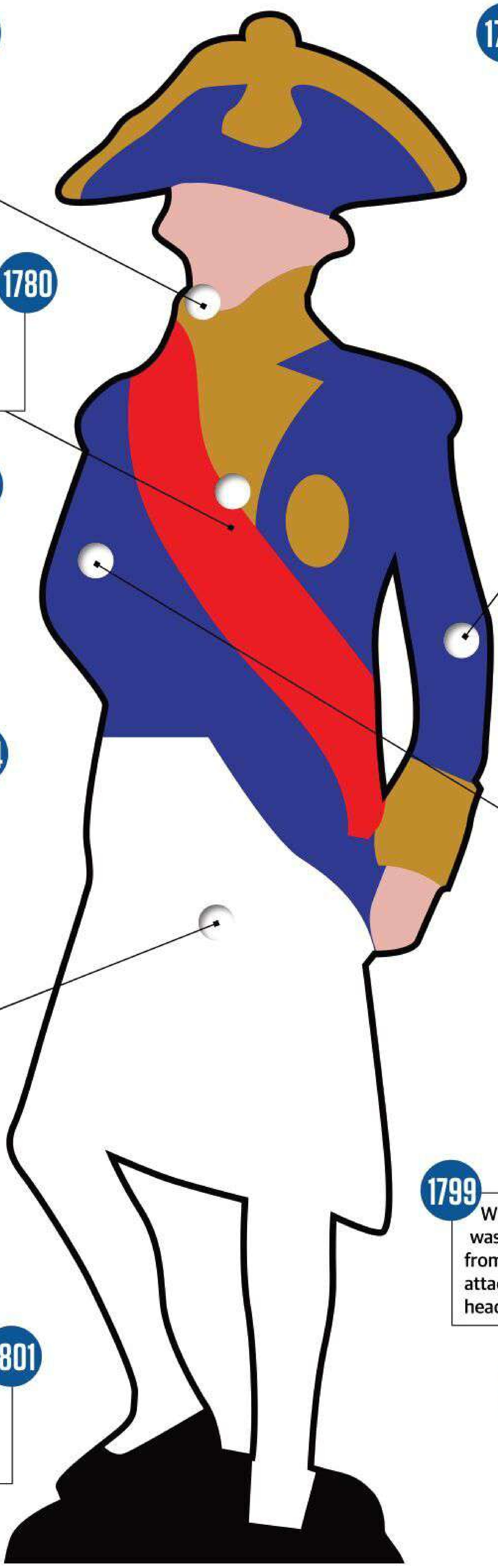
It was during this period of revolution, unrest and war that Nelson achieved some of his lesser known but equally notable victories against the Spanish at Cape Vincent in 1797 and at the Battle of Copenhagen. The bold, intrepid commander was beginning to carve a name for himself. His men adored him because not only was he extremely capable, but he was also daring – a trait that cost him the sight in his right eye. In the British Navy he was something of a rebel, ignoring orders to withdraw. In one instance during the Battle of Copenhagen, he lifted his telescope to his blind eye, pretending not to see the command to



Nelson's easily recognisable medals made him a high-value target for French sharpshooters at Trafalgar

Nelson's illnesses and injuries

Nelson's tendency to put himself in the heart of battle led to him suffering an abundance of ailments throughout his seafaring career



1771 When Nelson's naval career began, so did his ongoing battle with a sailor's worst nightmare – chronic seasickness. Nelson suffered with the ailment for the rest of his life.

1776 Nelson suffered his first bout of what would be a reoccurring sickness – malaria. This first attack almost took his life, but also gave him a vision of a voice telling him that he would become a hero.

1780 In San Juan, Nelson suffered from a cornucopia of ailments – dysentery, yellow fever, chest pain and even poisoning from a toxic fruit.

1781 While in London, Nelson complained that his left arm and leg were causing him distress. The fingers on his left hand were also white, numb and swollen.

1782 Like many sailors at the time, Nelson and his crew suffered from scurvy, and this would become a repetitive sickness that the admiral would later work to eliminate on his ships.

1787 Upon returning from the West Indies, Nelson was struck down with a fever so severe that a keg of rum was prepared to preserve his body if he were to pass away.

1794 In Bastia, Nelson was almost killed by a huge amount of dirt from a heavy shot falling on him. Days later, he was hit by earth and rocks from an explosion and was blinded in his right eye.

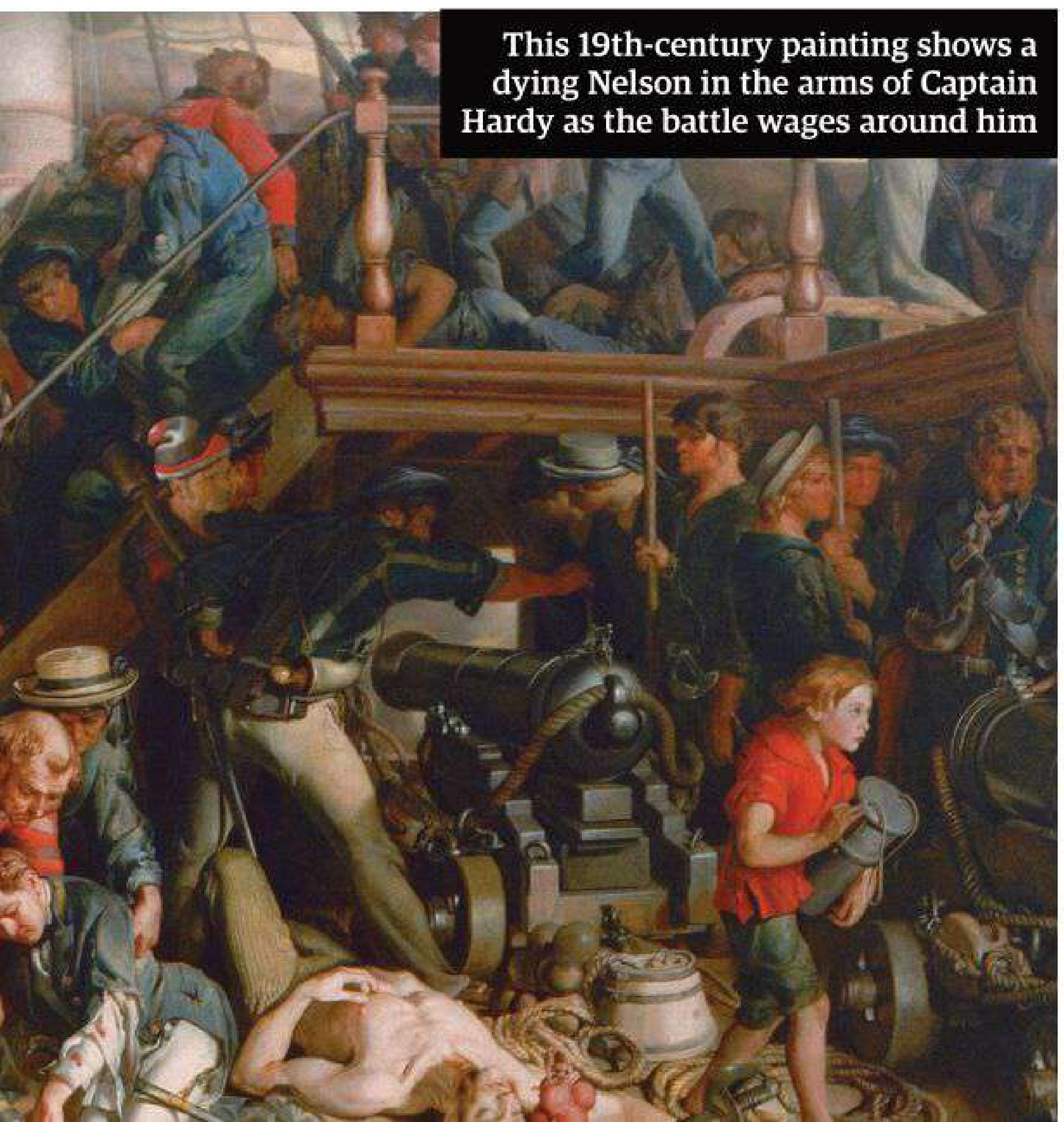
1797 In the midst of battle, Nelson received a musket ball shot above his right elbow. It was declared that he was killed, but the ship's surgeon amputated his forearm. Half an hour later, he returned to battle.

1798 Nelson was hit with a fragment of shot during battle. Again he declared himself dead, but continued on commanding the battle while bleeding profusely. Nelson suffered with blinding headaches for the remainder of his life.

1799 While in Palermo, Sicily, Nelson was reported to be suffering from what he believed to be heart attacks, accompanied by depression, headaches, sickness and indigestion.

1801 Again Nelson proclaimed his death was close when he suffered from severe heatstroke and vomiting, but he recovered remarkably quickly.

1805 During the Battle of Trafalgar, Nelson was struck in the shoulder and spine. Once more he stated: "I have but a short time to live." This time he was correct.



This 19th-century painting shows a dying Nelson in the arms of Captain Hardy as the battle wages around him

Today HMS Victory is on display at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

withdraw. Nelson's force of will and bullish British spirit won him victory after victory, and although he was admired greatly as a leader, a remnant of the young man seeking affirmation and glory remained. Depression and self doubt were demons that Nelson was doomed to fight until his final day, foes that even a million naval victories and commendations could not vanquish.

Although a peace treaty had been signed with France in 1802, just a year later war broke out once again. Nelson was appointed commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet and hoisted his flag on the ship that would be forever linked with his name, HMS Victory. His mission was to blockade Toulon to prevent French ships there meeting up with those in the Atlantic and also Spanish ships in Cadiz and Cartagena. Britain was well aware that the prize Napoleon desired most of all was invasion of their own country, and its ultimate destruction. With the combined force of these ships, that invasion was a very real possibility. If united, this single invincible fleet could take control of the Channel, enabling the French emperor to ravage Britain and leave it in tatters. It was up to Nelson and his men to stop that happening.

The French Admiral Pierre Villeneuve was a man under pressure. It was under his command that the combined fleet was to sail, and it was up to him to ensure that happened. Although Nelson and his fleet lurked nearby, Villeneuve managed to sneak out of Toulon under cover of bad weather. Upon realising the admiral had moved, Nelson set off in pursuit. The French reunited with some of their ships, but they failed to take control of the Channel so fled south to Cadiz with their fleet.

Napoleon was not pleased with Villeneuve's delay and already had plans to replace him. It was a final accusation of cowardice that forced Villeneuve to leave the harbour, and as far as he knew, there was no British force nearby that could hope to best him. Unfortunately for Villeneuve, he was wrong.

When Villeneuve first made for Cadiz, Nelson had returned home, and for 25 days he had perfected his strategy. Napoleon had refocused his efforts on his Grande Armée in Austria, but in England, invasion by sea still seemed a very real possibility, and Nelson was the hero who could prevent it. On 15 September 1805, Nelson set sail on Victory again, and was very careful to keep his main fleet well out to sea. Villeneuve had no idea that what he was running into was a strategy designed to stop him for good, and a man who still had something to prove.

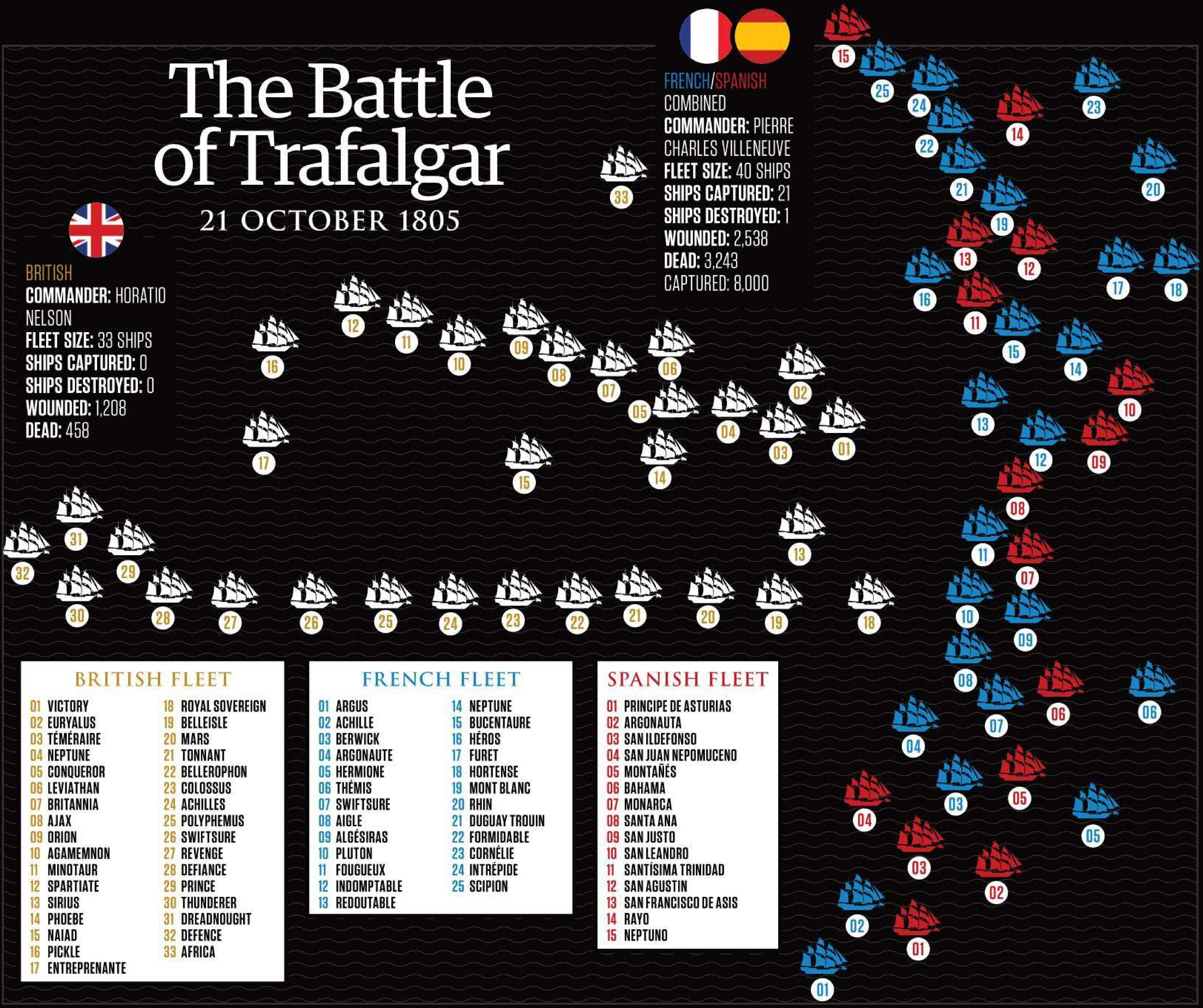
As the silhouettes of the combined fleet appeared against the sunrise over Cape Trafalgar, the British finally began to move. They split into two divisions, one led by Nelson and the other by Collingwood. On board Victory, Nelson ordered his lieutenant to carry a message to the fleet: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Nelson was many things – curious, energetic, even reckless. His adventurous spirit and quest for personal pride had led him to travel to the furthest reaches of the world, but it had been his duty that kept him there. It was this sense of duty in the face of fear and danger that Nelson instilled in his men that day.

The men had every right to be afraid. Naval tactics at the time meant that almost every battle followed a set sequence – the ships would line up against each other and attack from the broadside cannons. This strategy was such an integral part of naval warfare at the time that it had inspired the name 'ship of the line' for the vessels that took part in it. But Nelson had other plans. He would deviate from the norm, and instead of facing down the line of Villeneuve's fleet in the ordinary fashion, he would attack them from the west, at right angles, in two squadrons. This put Nelson and his men at immense risk, as they were exposed to the fleet's powerful and devastating broadside cannons, but if they could cut their way through, they could slice the fleet in three and destroy it.

The British aligned themselves into two long lines, and like two arrows fired forward. They stormed towards the combined fleet, led by

The Battle of Trafalgar

21 OCTOBER 1805



BRITISH
COMMANDER: HORATIO NELSON
FLEET SIZE: 33 SHIPS
SHIPS CAPTURED: 0
SHIPS DESTROYED: 0
WOUNDED: 1,208
DEAD: 458

FRENCH/SPANISH COMBINED
COMMANDER: PIERRE CHARLES VILLENEUVE
FLEET SIZE: 40 SHIPS
SHIPS CAPTURED: 21
SHIPS DESTROYED: 1
WOUNDED: 2,538
DEAD: 3,243
CAPTURED: 8,000

BRITISH FLEET

01	VICTORY
02	EURYALUS
03	TÉMÉRAIRE
04	NEPTUNE
05	CONQUEROR
06	LEVIATHAN
07	BRITANNIA
08	AJAX
09	ORION
10	AGAMEMNON
11	MINOTAUR
12	SPARTIATE
13	SIRIUS
14	PHOEBE
15	NAIAD
16	PICKLE
17	ENTREPRENANTE
18	ROYAL SOVEREIGN
19	BELLEISLE
20	MARS
21	TONNANT
22	BELLEROPHON
23	COLOSSUS
24	ACHILLES
25	POLYPHEMUS
26	SWIFTSURE
27	REVENGE
28	DEFIANCE
29	PRINCE
30	THUNDERER
31	DREADNOUGHT
32	DEFENCE
33	AFRICA

FRENCH FLEET

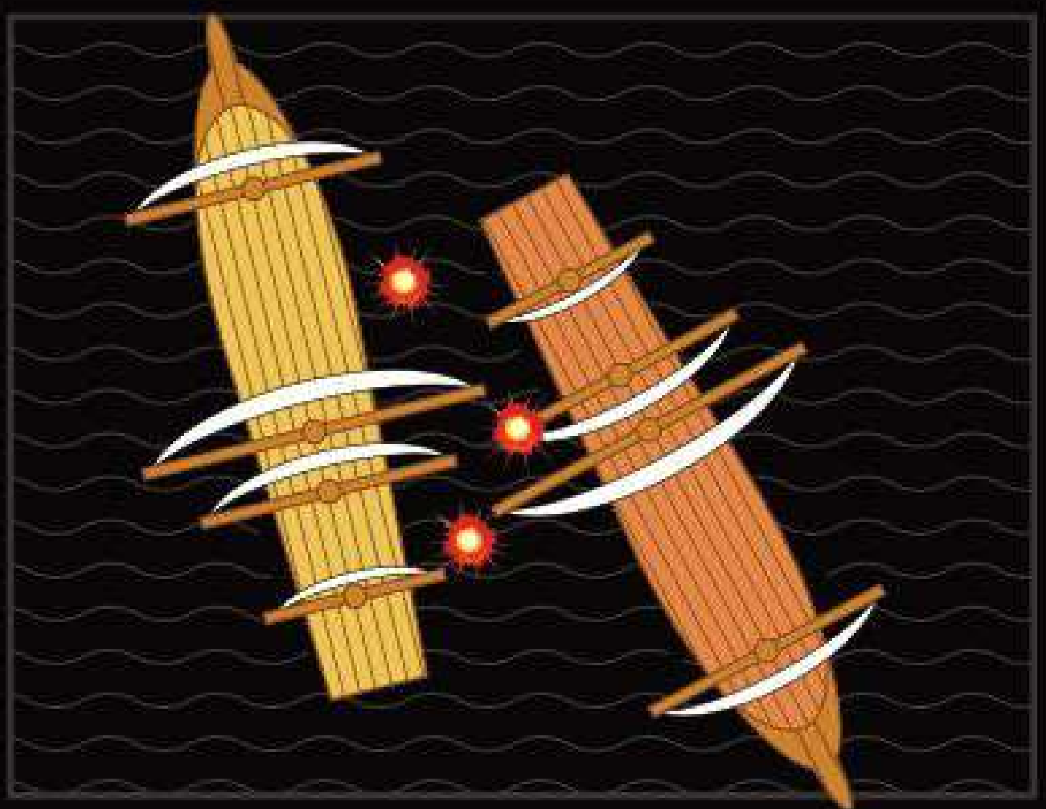
01	ARGUS
02	ACHILLE
03	BERWICK
04	ARGONAUTE
05	HERMIONE
06	THÉMIS
07	SWIFTSURE
08	AIGLE
09	ALGÉSIRAS
10	PLUTON
11	FOUGUEUX
12	INDOMPTABLE
13	REDOUTABLE
14	NEPTUNE
15	BUCENTAURE
16	HÉROS
17	FURET
18	HORTENSE
19	MONT BLANC
20	RHIN
21	DUGUAY TROUIN
22	FORMIDABLE
23	CORNÉLIE
24	INTRÉPIDE
25	SCIPION

SPANISH FLEET

01	PRINCIPE DE ASTURIAS
02	ARGONAUTA
03	SAN ILDEFONSO
04	SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO
05	MONTAÑÉS
06	BAHAMA
07	MONARCA
08	SANTA ANA
09	SAN JUSTO
10	SAN LEANDRO
11	SANTÍSIMA TRINIDAD
12	SAN AGUSTIN
13	SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS
14	RAYO
15	NEPTUNO

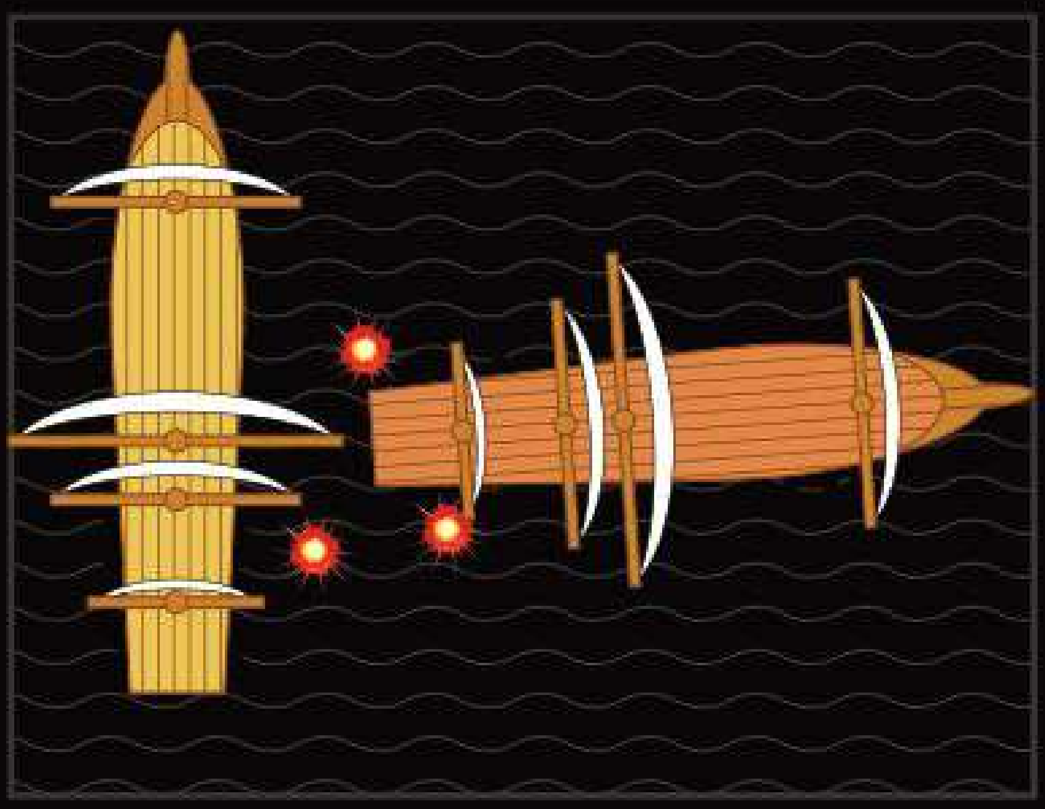
Nelson's tactics

Battle at sea usually followed defined tactics, but Nelson deviated, risked everything and claimed the most decisive victory of the war



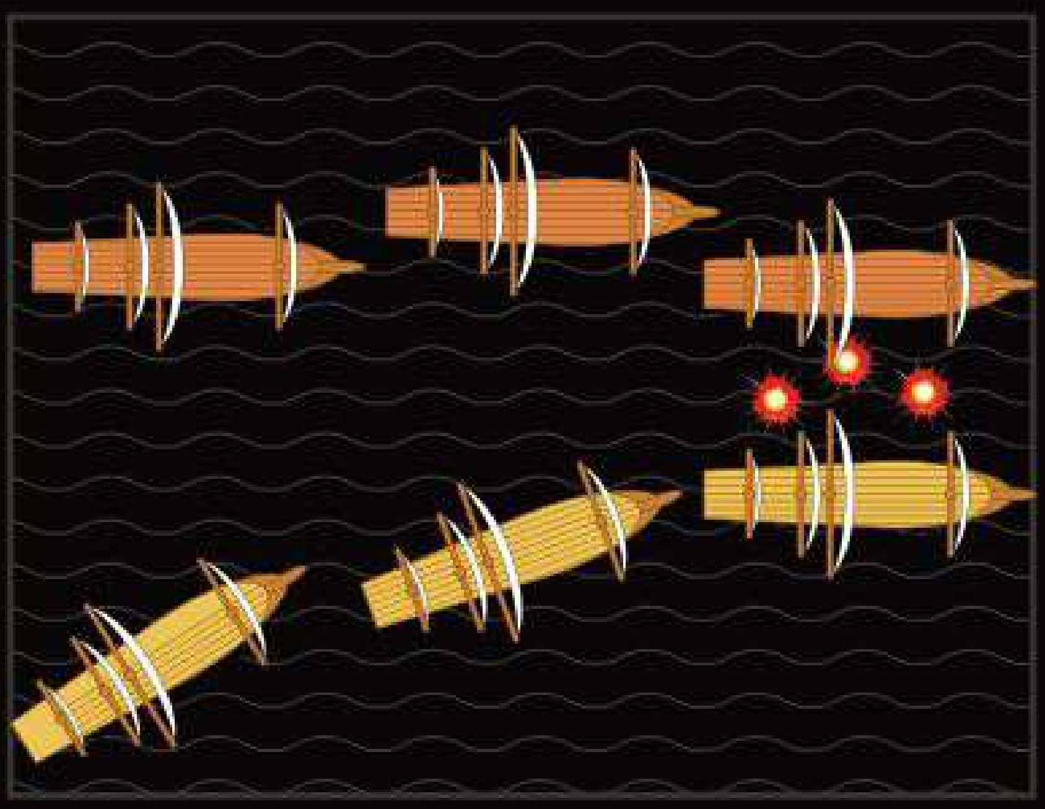
Broadside

Because it was near impossible for ships to fire over the bow or stern, all the guns were positioned along the side of the ship. Because of this, it was the captain's aim to face the side of their ships against the enemy's side and then unleash the cannons in an attack. This technique was known as a broadside.



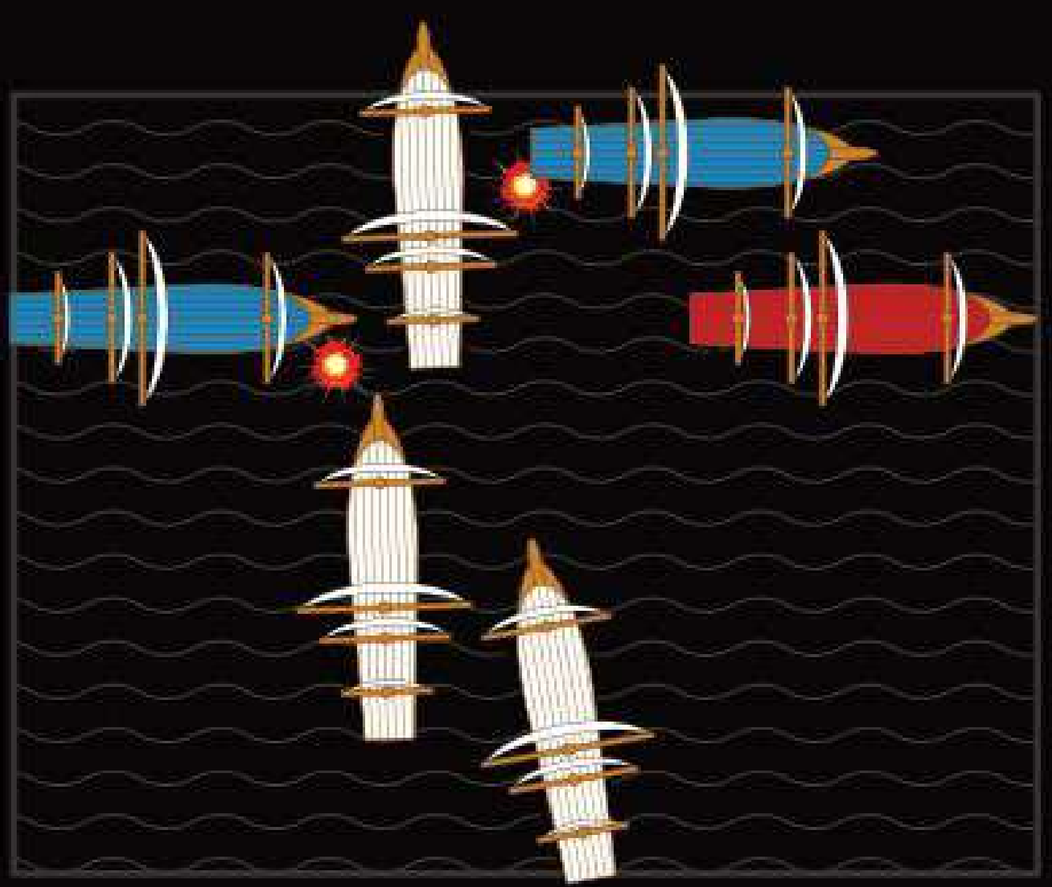
Raking

A broadside attack was powerful, but it exposed the ship to the enemy ship's fire. It was safer for the vessel to bring its broadside to the bow or stern of the enemy vessel. This meant the ship was able to fire through the entire length of the ship, while the enemy was unable to return fire. This was called 'raking'.



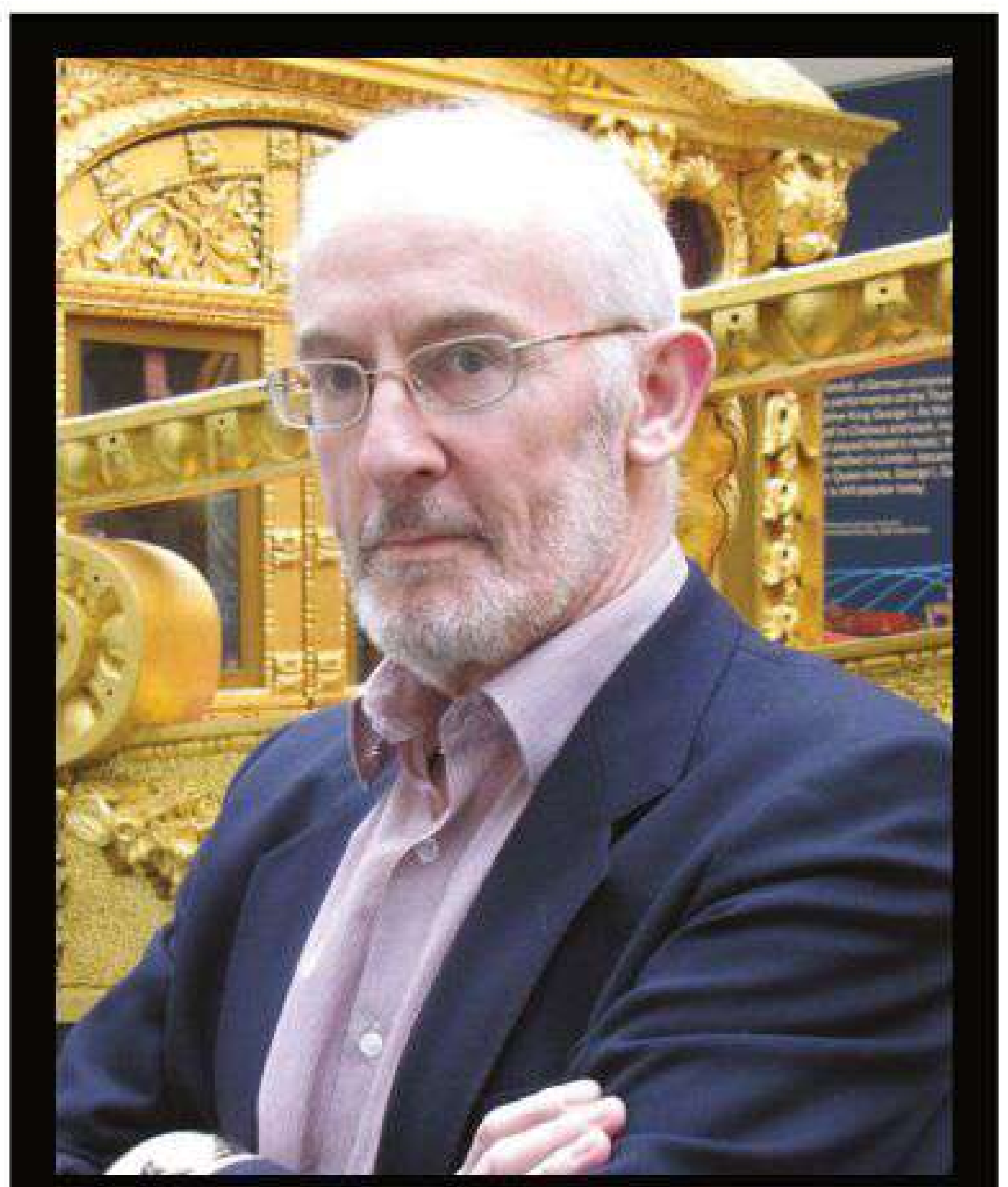
Traditional formation

Because the main aim of battles was to bring your ships broadside against the enemy's in order to unleash devastating firepower, ships would be aligned to unleash a torrent of attacks against each other. Often this resulted in two lines of ships sailing parallel and exchanging broadside over and over again.



The Nelson Touch

During the Battle of Trafalgar, Nelson made the risky decision to abandon the traditional tactic and instead he attacked the fleet at right angles. His ships underwent a torrent of attacks as they approached, but when they broke through the line, they raked the enemy ships and knocked them out one by one.



Nelson's Legacy

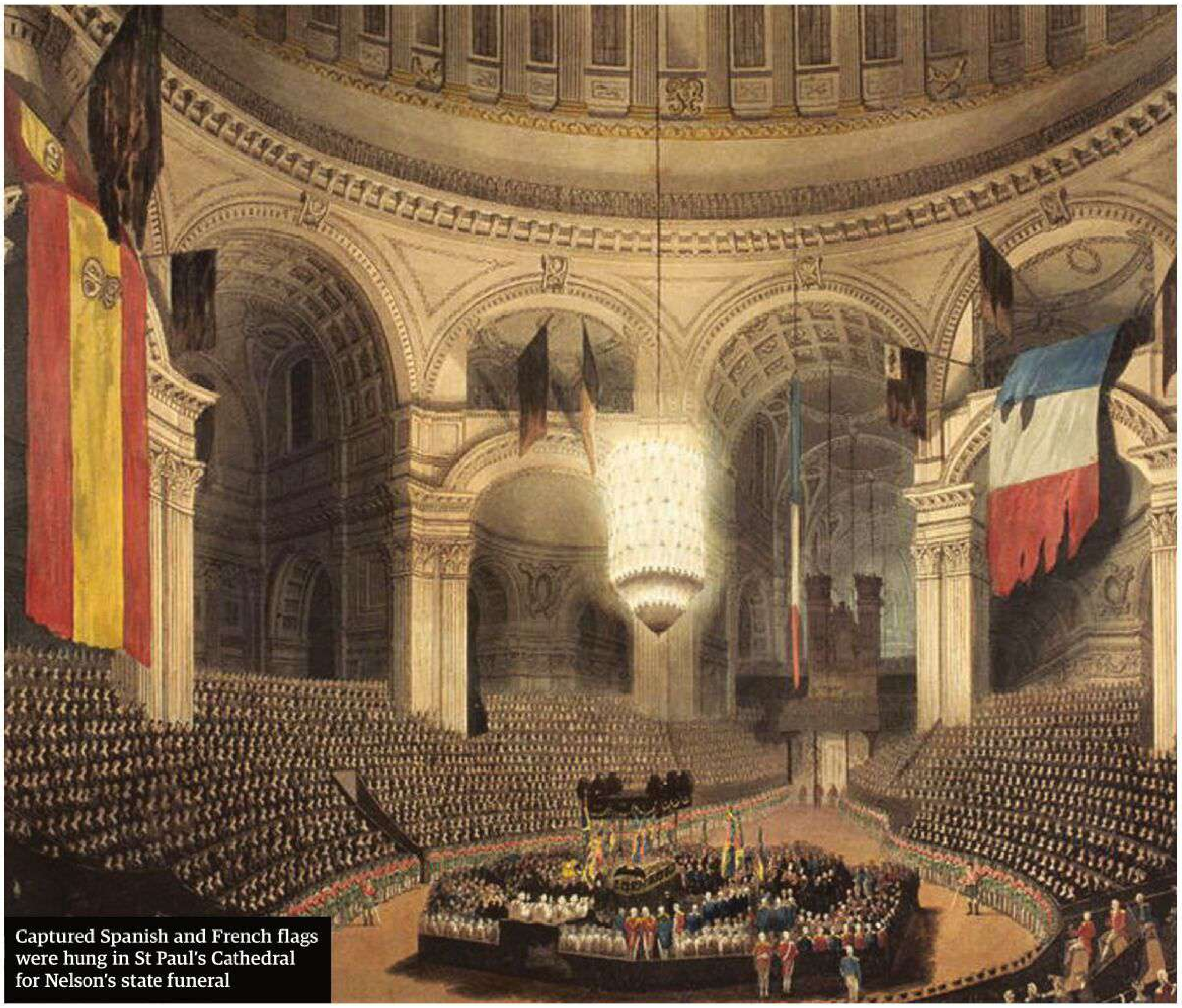
We speak to Roger Knight, who in 2000 changed his career from deputy director of the National Maritime Museum to that of teacher and author. His biggest book is the award-winning *The Pursuit Of Victory: The Life And Achievement Of Horatio Nelson* (2005). This biography was translated into French in 2015, the first time that this has happened since the 19th century. In September 2016, he is publishing a study guide on Nelson in the Connell Guides series.

How influential is Nelson and his legacy today?

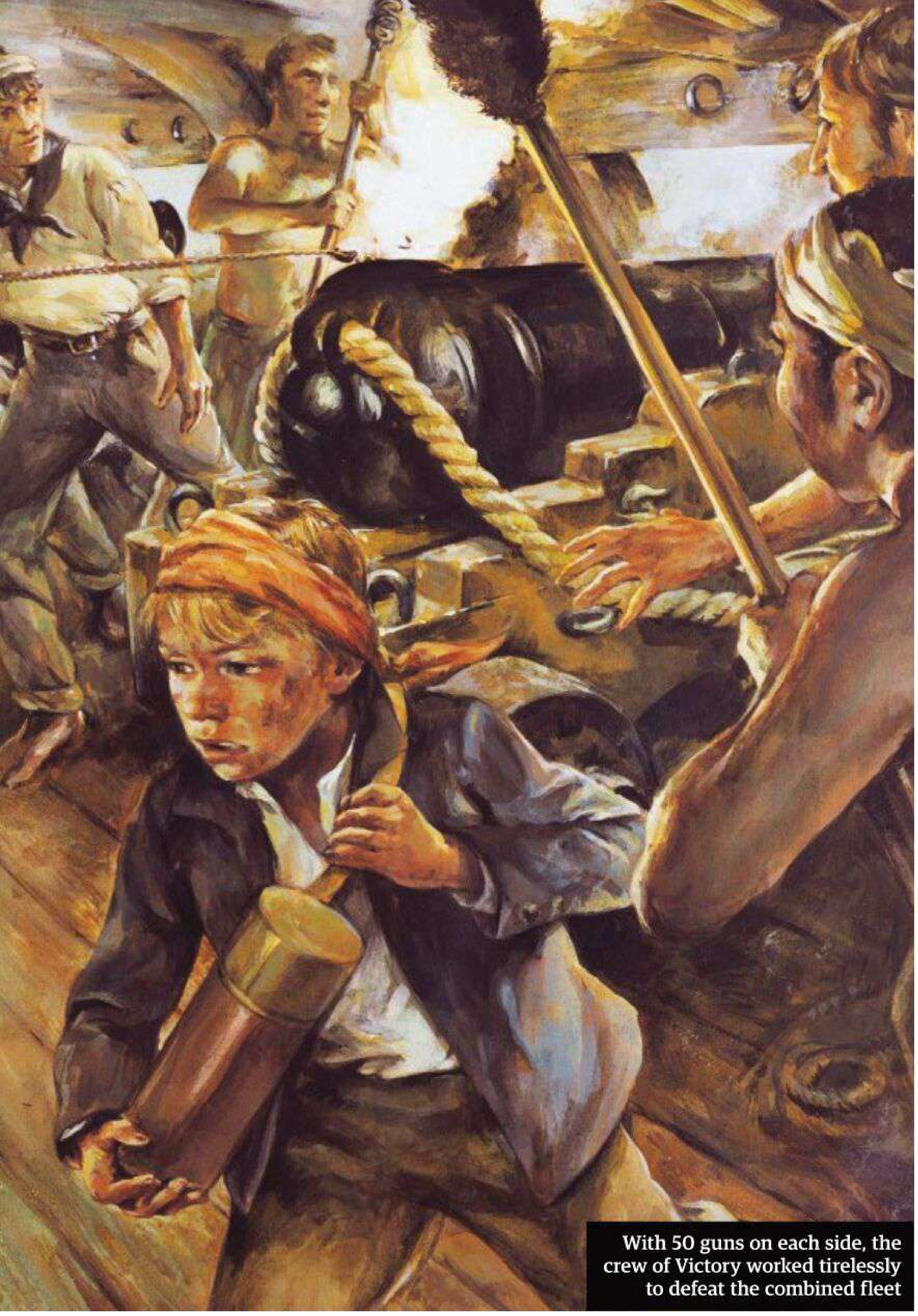
The legacy of Nelson has had a chequered history, for the straitlaced mid-Victorians did not approve of his relationship with Emma Hamilton and he was quietly dropped as a national hero. However, when the German naval threat emerged at the end of the 19th century, his heroic attributes were resurrected by those who wanted more warships to be built, and he came back into fashion.

The memory of his clear-cut victories led the British public to expect the Royal Navy to overwhelm the Germans in World War I – after the Battle of Jutland in 1916, they were to be disappointed. However, the memory of his character and victories re-emerged as morale-raising propaganda during World War II. In the 21st century, the Royal Navy no longer has a worldwide role or an empire to defend and is a fraction of its mid-20th-century size. Yet Nelson's influence remains, and he is still in the first rank of national heroes. Navies around the world still study his leadership and management methods, when, most unusually for the time, he trusted and delegated responsibility downwards. One change that has taken place is that historians know much more about the officers, seamen and ships of the Georgian sailing navy, and studies of Nelson take the role of many other people and historical factors into account when writing about his victories.

Perhaps the most difficult strand of Nelson's legacy to analyse is the way in which he is still seen as the person who led the national resistance against the might of Napoleonic France. How much does his memory affect our complex relations with the continent of Europe?



Captured Spanish and French flags were hung in St Paul's Cathedral for Nelson's state funeral



With 50 guns on each side, the crew of Victory worked tirelessly to defeat the combined fleet

Nelson's Column, in the heart of London, is a permanent reminder of the admiral's sacrifice

the flagships. The Franco-Spanish fleet were not expecting or prepared for such a tactic. The French ship Fougueux let off a broadside towards Collingwood's Royal Sovereign as he burst through the line, but it was too late. Sovereign raked Santa Ana, the Spanish flagship, with an attack so devastating it disabled 14 guns and 400 crew members. Victory meanwhile was leading the charge towards the two ships Redoubtable and Bucentaure. With the fleet so crowded together, Victory was forced to ram the ship and fire off broadsides at point-blank range.

The situation was so dangerous that many had urged Nelson to conduct the battle from a safe distance, or at least remove the stars of honour gleaming on his coat. Nelson refused. He had come close to death many times before, but he was convinced that he would meet his end at Trafalgar. He had already said farewell to his friends and family, and if he was going to die, he was going to go out with his medals on his chest.

French sailors in the rigging of Redoubtable were already picking off men exposed on Victory's deck. Minutes before Nelson himself was shot, a man standing beside him was blown in half by a cannon ball, but Nelson did not move. Whether it was for pride, bravado or courage, Nelson remained on the deck of his ship. Shortly after 1pm, a musket shot hit Nelson, throwing him to the deck floor and shattering his spine. Still calling out instructions to his crew, he was carried below and examined by a surgeon, who confirmed death was imminent.

Despite his injuries and suffering immense pain, Nelson constantly asked for updates on the battle. Before he died, he was informed that the British fleet had taken 15 enemy ships. Nelson's dangerous tactic had worked; he knew he had won. As he drew his last breath, his beloved flag captain Hardy kissed his forehead and Nelson uttered his final words: "Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my duty." Nelson had never desired a long, comfortable life; he was a master of the seas and a seeker of adventure. As he left this world with the news of his greatest victory ringing in his ears, he departed it, finally, with pride.

Nelson's fatal injury caused him to miss the climax of the battle, where three British ships battered the French flagship Bucentaure into submission, and Villeneuve was forced to surrender. All around British ships were tearing holes into the combined fleet, at great loss of life. The French ship Achille refused to surrender, and was blown up with everyone on board. By the end of the battle, the British had suffered 1,666 casualties, while the combined fleet's casualties numbered near 14,000. France and Spain lost approximately 21 ships in the battle, while Britain lost none. Napoleon's plans to invade were well and truly thwarted.

The victory at Trafalgar had cemented British dominance of the sea, a mastery that would go unchallenged for ten more years of war, and more than 100 years of worldwide naval domination. However, this victory was completely overshadowed in England by the news of Nelson's death. He had been the nation's hero before he departed, and when his body was returned, he was their martyr. Nelson's body was preserved for the journey back in a cask of rum, as the admiral had requested a land burial. He was honoured with a magnificent state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral, and his popularity soared. His image was carved into countless statues and monuments, streets were named after him, and his flagship was painstakingly preserved, surviving today as the oldest naval ship still in commission.

Nelson's rise from a small, sickly child to the greatest and most beloved war hero in British history is unlikely to ever be repeated. He remains a key part of British identity, and his famous column resides at the heart of the capital. The man himself has taken on an almost god-like status, a source of pride, duty and bravery. But he was also a man who was led by a desire to prove himself, who suffered with self doubt. Perhaps this is Nelson and Britain's greatest achievement, not a naval victory, but the willpower and bravery to sail against the winds of uncertainty and fear, and to overcome.

HMS Victory

Famous for its pivotal role in the Battle of Trafalgar, today HMS Victory serves as a living, breathing museum of the Georgian navy

Although Victory is famous for its part in Trafalgar, Victory as a ship had experienced many battles before Nelson commanded it, and many more afterwards. Laid down in 1759 and launched in 1765, Victory was commissioned as a new first-rate ship. The vessel was unusually large during a period when smaller, faster ships were used by the British navy, but with 100, and eventually 104, guns on board, it was a force to be reckoned with. Victory took part in the Battle of Ushant, the Siege of Gibraltar and the Battle of Cape St Vincent before it was reconstructed for Nelson and Trafalgar. The vessel was fated to outlive its famous master, and sailed on numerous expeditions into the Baltic before being finally moored in Portsmouth in late 1812.

Pole masts
Victory's masts were made from several large strips of wood bound together securely with iron hoops.

Size
Victory measured 69.34 meters overall, and could move at a maximum speed of eight to nine knots (15 to 17 km/h). It also required 821 crew members to sail it sufficiently.

Figurehead
Originally Victory carried a heavy, ornate, decorative figurehead, but this began to rot and was replaced with a far lighter, simpler and practical design.

Guns
Victory originally boasted 100 guns, but restorations before Trafalgar took the ship to 104 guns over four decks. The cannonballs fired at Trafalgar weighed up to 15kg.

Chainwales
Chainwales were the fixings at the side of the vessel for standing rigging sat on the upper deck gun ports. This prevented the rigging from interfering with the guns when fired.

Tops
Reducing weight and increasing speed was a big priority when reconstructing Victory, so the tops, originally made from heavy oak, were replaced with ones made from fir in two halves.

Paintwork
Between 1800 and 1803, Victory underwent significant repairs, and it was then that it was painted with the iconic black and yellow streaks. This would later be adopted by all Royal Navy warships.

Gun deck
Victory carried 32-pound guns on the lower gun deck. Not only did they use less gunpowder than the previous 42-pound ones, but they were also lighter, and quicker and easier to load.

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The British Empire strikes back

With British America no more, the empire turned to the exploration of the Pacific and dealing with a threat closer to home – Napoleon

As the dust settled on a catastrophic defeat in the American War of Independence, Britain was forced to evaluate its position in the New World that it found itself in. It had to evolve or die. The French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte would turn Europe into a volatile battleground, and the largest empire on Earth had to be ready and waiting for the onslaught.

Aside from dealing with military matters, Britain had decided to turn its land-seeking attentions towards the great unknown of the Pacific Ocean, and far-off and exotic lands such as the mythical Southern Continent. The War of 1812 was further confirmation that Britain had lost its colonies in the Americas for good, but both Canada and the Caribbean were holding strong within the grasp of the empire.

Between 1815 and 1914, about 26 million square kilometres and 400 million people were added to the empire

Back in Europe, Napoleon had become so powerful on the continent that a series of coalitions had been set up to prevent the spread of the First French Empire. There would be seven coalitions in total, and Britain made the decision to ally with the likes of the Holy Roman Empire, Russia, Prussia, as well as a host of other nations as the alliances that formed to defeat Napoleon became more convoluted over the years.

By the end, Britain had fought so hard that it had amassed a national debt of about £861 million. All these efforts ultimately ended in victory, with Napoleon's eventual fall in 1815.

This, along with the fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, cemented Britain's status as a world power and ushered in an era of 'Pax Britannica' as the empire continued to expand, becoming unimaginably vast.

"Britain had decided to turn its land-seeking attentions towards the great unknown of the Pacific Ocean"

Captain Cook wasn't the first European to set foot on Australia's east coast. That honour belongs to his nephew, Isaac Smith

Captain James Cook was described in the House of Lords as "the first navigator in Europe"

Exploration of the Pacific Ocean

The courage of the Royal Navy gave the empire access to some of the only places on Earth left untouched by the West

With America independent and Europe a hotbed of unrest, lands further afield were sought to expand the empire's borders. In this age of imperialism, the most famous trailblazer was Captain James Cook, who rose through the ranks to successfully map out Australia, New Zealand and other areas of the Pacific. After his untimely death in 1779, many more ships disembarked from the British Isles to explore and discover for their queen and their country.

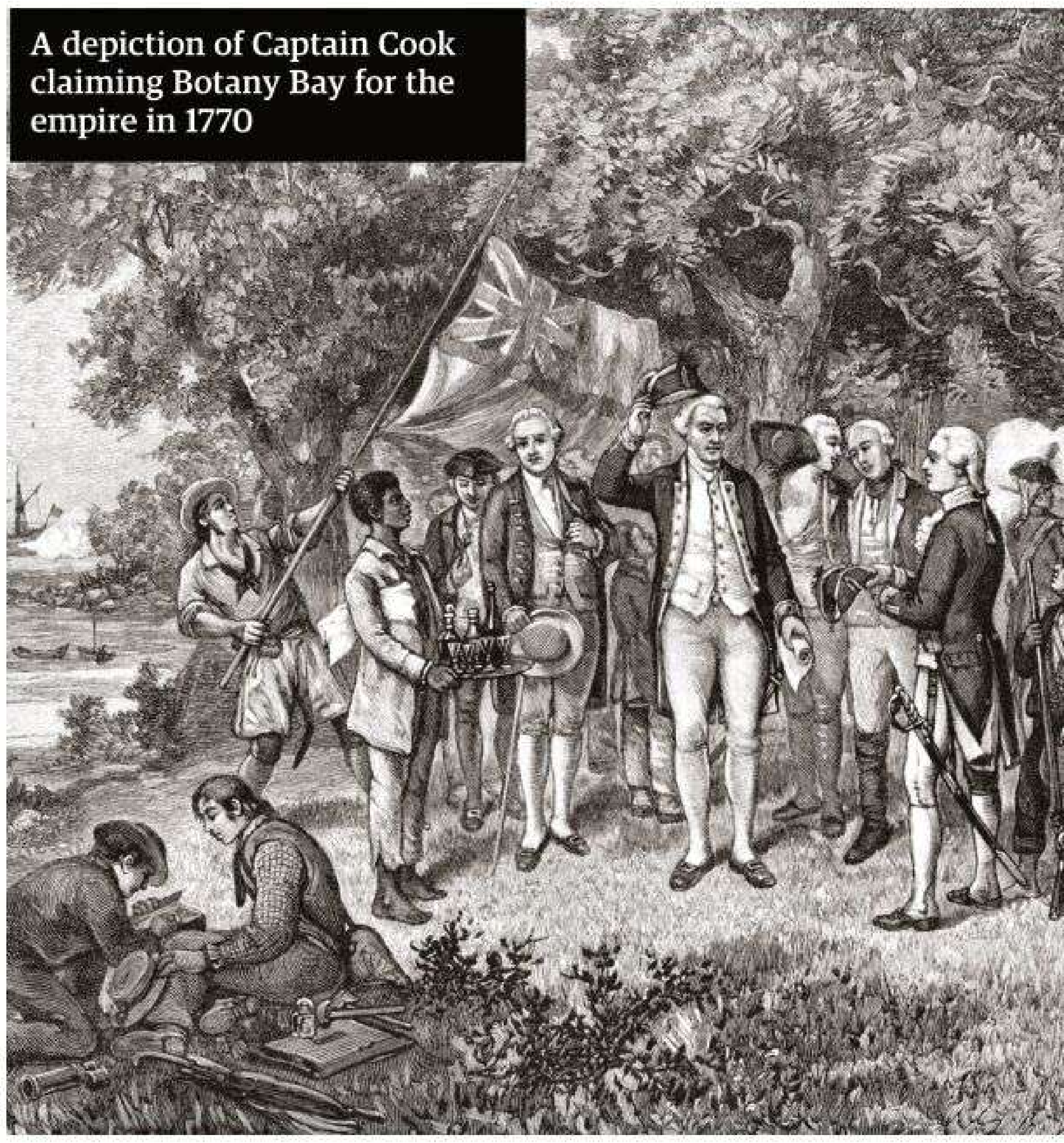
As the tide began to turn against France in the Napoleonic Wars, Britain was given a major boost in its bid to lead the exploration of the Pacific. Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Malta, Guyana and Mauritius were just a few of the colonies that were secured during the Second British Empire as the Royal Navy regained its rule of the waves - after a few wobbles - with all new steam-powered warships on the horizon. The harbour of Trincomalee in Ceylon in particular would become an integral Royal Navy port in years to come.

With the 13 American colonies lost after the revolutionary war, Britain had issues with a sudden influx of its own prisoners from the New World. With jails and prison ships already full, the decision was taken to transport criminals to far-off colonies to work for the empire. This move gave Britain a workforce with which to conquer and occupy vast areas, as well as consume resources for the good of the empire's industry.

Cook's former botanist Joseph Banks earmarked an area on the east coast of Australia known as Botany Bay as an ideal location for an all new penal settlement. Banks's idea was approved and the colonisation of New South Wales began in 1786; the first shipment of convicts arrived two years later. New cities such as Sydney were established as modern Australia took shape.

> The imaginary figure of 'John Bull' was used as a symbol of empire in a similar way to the American 'Uncle Sam'

These new Pacific lands differed from the British administration in India, which was merely exploited for its resources by the ever-growing East India Company. However, like North America had been, Australia was seen as a colony of permanent settlement. The area's natural inhabitants, the Aborigines, were pushed out and affected by Western diseases. Australia was labelled a *terra nullius* (nobody's land) and considered a free-for-all for settlement. This view towards native people came to personify some of the worst that the empire stood for.



A depiction of Captain Cook claiming Botany Bay for the empire in 1770

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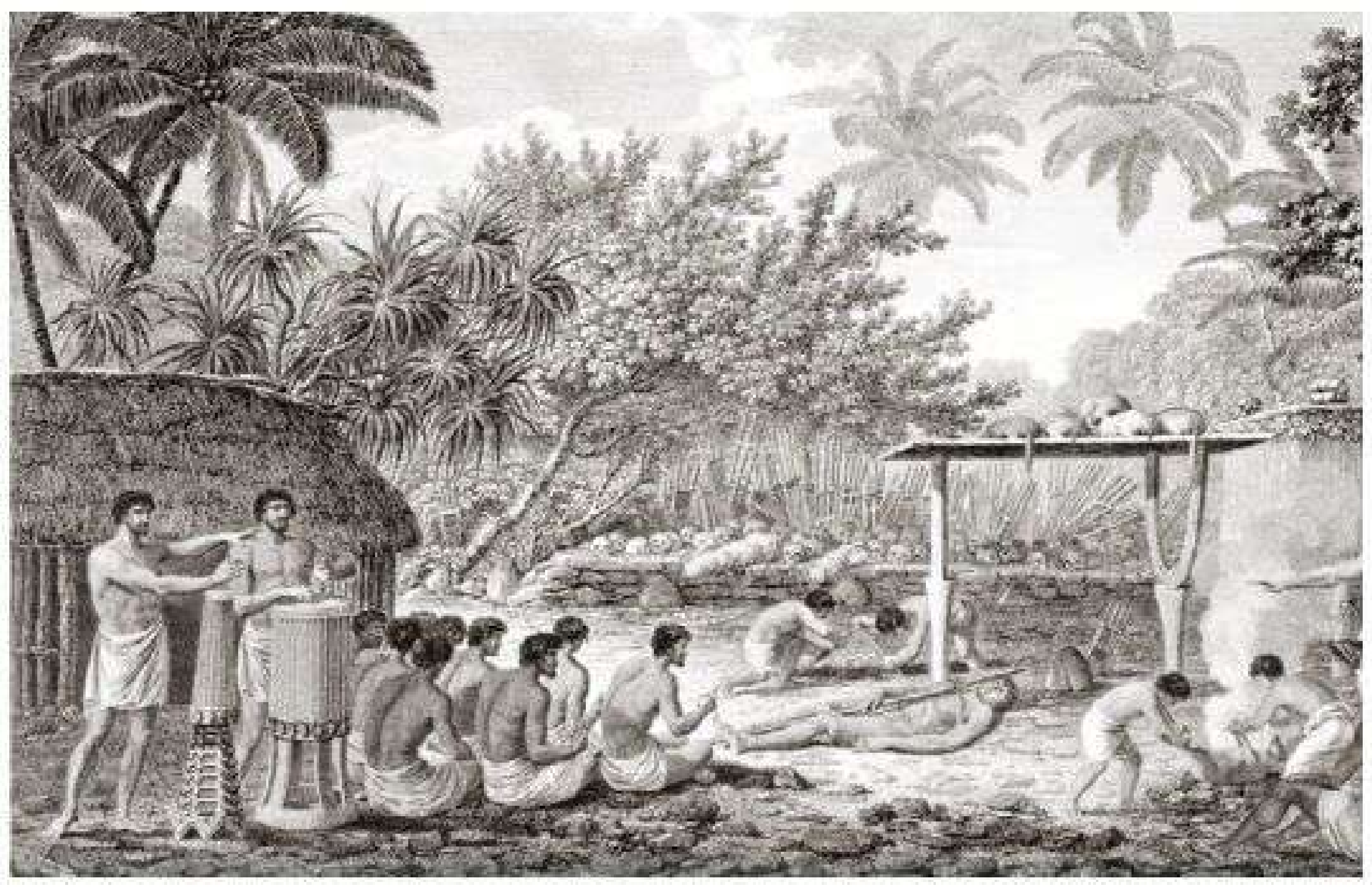
Taking over the mantle from Cook were two more explorers: George Bass and Matthew Flinders. A naval surgeon and a naval officer respectively, they both had an appetite for conquest. Combined, they are credited with discovering Cape Everard, Western Port and the Furneaux Islands. By 1798, they had discovered that Tasmania was an island, and in 1804, Flinders successfully circumnavigated the entire continent. He even managed to sail as far as Tahiti and Hawaii, examining the west coast of the Americas as well. Bass was a keen observer of the flora and fauna this new world had to offer and is credited with discovering rich deposits of coal in the Sydney area. The efforts of explorers like Bass and Flinders would have been much more arduous if it wasn't for the British gaining the



Defining moment

Arrival in Tahiti 13 April 1769

Sailing from England around Cape Horn, Cook and the crew of Endeavour make it to Tahiti. An incredibly remote location for the explorers, it had only been discovered by Europeans a year previous and was initially thought to be the start of a whole new continent. It is on Tahiti that on-board astronomer Charles Green observes the transit of Venus, a rare visible event where the planet crosses in front of the Sun. The crew would eventually leave to press on to New Zealand, but Cook would later return to try to find the fabled Southern Continent.

James Cook: Exploration & discovery

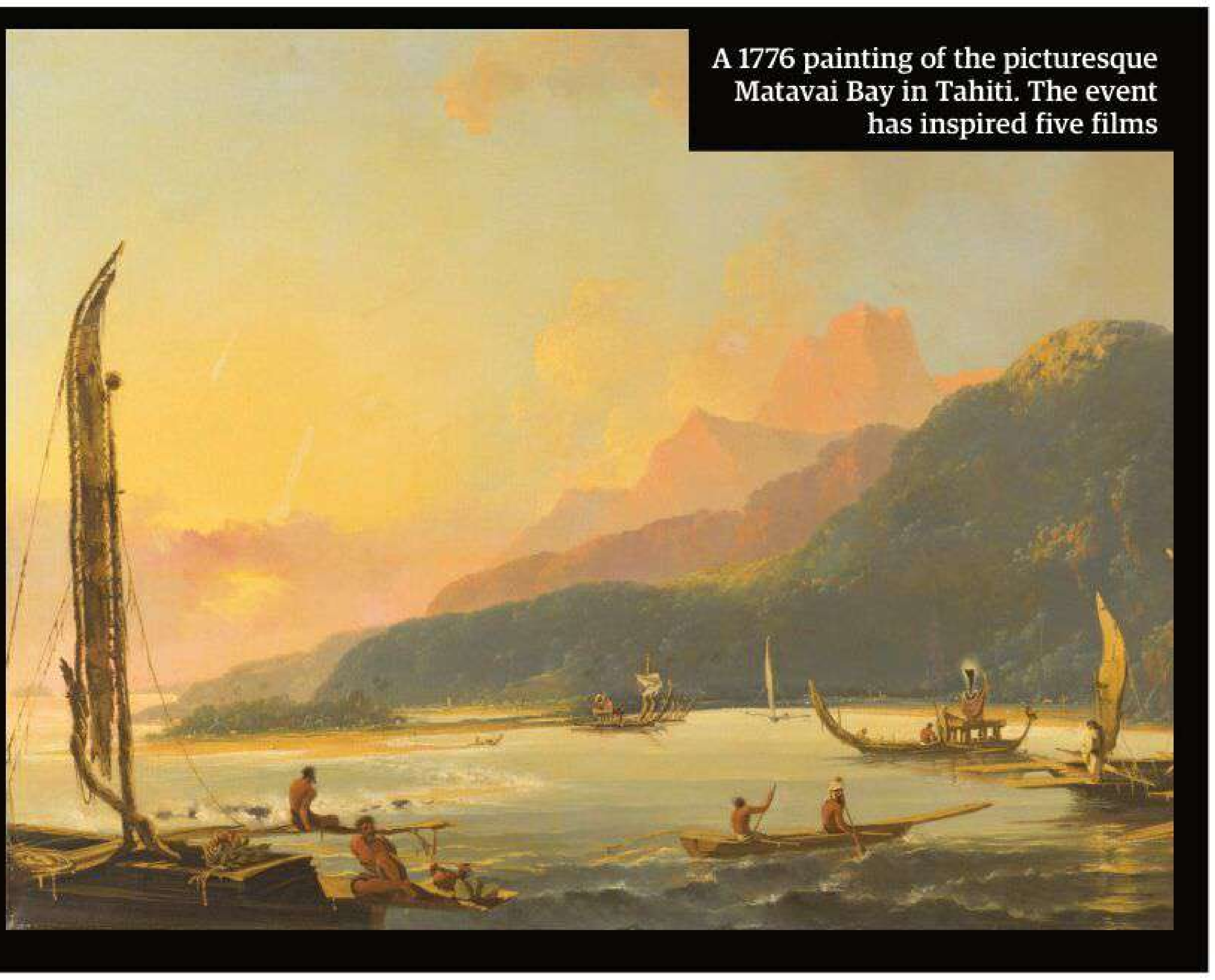
1728

- **An explorer is born** James Cook is born on 27 October and lives in Marton, a suburb of the town of Middlesbrough. His family later moves to Great Ayton where he attends school. **1728**
- **The young apprentice** The teenage Cook becomes an apprentice and serves both William Sanderson, a haberdasher, and John Walker, a Whitby ship owner for a combined total of ten years. **1745**
- **Joining the navy** Ten years after starting his apprenticeships, Cook joins the Royal Navy and sees service in both the English Channel and the Atlantic. He learns to survey and chart. **1755**
- **Wartime service** The Seven Years' War breaks out and Cook sails with the British fleet to Canada. He maps the Saint Lawrence River, which would become an important route in the 1775 siege of Quebec. **1758**
- **Marriage to Elizabeth** Cook returns home from war to marry Elizabeth Batts. They get married in Barking, London, but within a year the budding explorer is back on the seas again, this time mapping Newfoundland. **1762**
- **Back on the seas** His proficiency in exploration is plain to see and Cook is rewarded with the leadership of an expedition to the South Seas. He visits Rio de Janeiro and Tierra del Fuego. **1768**

Mutiny on the Bounty

One of the most famous mutinies in British naval history began on HMS Bounty in 1789 off the coast of Tahiti. The ship left Britain to collect a cargo of breadfruit saplings on 23 December 1787 and reached the isolated tropical island the following year. After the 43,452-kilometre and ten-month-long journey, the crew of the Bounty were struck by the beauty of the island and the hospitality of the natives. Some of the men fell in love with Tahitian women and many were unwilling to leave this newfound paradise.

Nevertheless, the Bounty continued on its journey but the crew were now restless and, led by first mate Fletcher Christian, staged a coup against Captain William Bligh. The captain and 18 loyal sailors were cast off in a small boat and eventually made it to the safety of Timor after a gruelling 6,701-kilometre voyage. Back on board the mutinous ship, the men decided to return to Tahiti. After settling there, a number of the sailors left in search of another haven and founded Pitcairn. These men avoided detection from the vengeful Royal Navy but the crew who stayed on Tahiti were eventually captured, tried and hanged.



A 1776 painting of the picturesque Matavai Bay in Tahiti. The event has inspired five films

Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch, which acted as a halfway house for voyages to the Pacific before the days of British occupation of the Suez Canal.

As the 19th century got under way, colonies were springing up rapidly across Australia's eastern coast and Britain now laid claim to this vast area. An authoritative constitutional structure was set up as the former convicts began to establish a new life for themselves in this once distant territory. Religion spread as well, with groups such as the London Missionary Society helping establish Christianity in the Pacific. The religion spread through the territories but conversion was more difficult than in the early days of empire. One story tells of a group of 17 missionaries led by explorer James Wilson who, on arrival in Tahiti, were driven off by firearm-wielding natives.

With Australia under the rule of the Crown, Britain turned its attention to New Zealand and other Pacific islands before taking part in the scramble for Africa and realising the growing importance of opium in the Far East. America might have been lost but the acquisition of Australia and other colonies ushered in a new age for the empire. An era of unparalleled British imperialism had begun.

> "Australia was labelled a *terra nullius* (nobody's land) and considered a free-for-all for settlement"

Circumnavigation of New Zealand

After Tahiti, Cook and his men move on to New Zealand and chart both the north and south Islands between October 1769 and February 1770.
1769

Defining moment

Australian expedition

April-August 1770

After leaving New Zealand, Endeavour comes across a landmass known by the Dutch as New Holland since its discovery in 1644. Cook begins by charting the east coast, discovering an area he calls Stingray, which would later be called Botany Bay. Disaster strikes on 10 June when Endeavour strikes the Great Barrier Reef, but it is soon repaired just in time for the first ever British sighting (and shooting) of a kangaroo. Cook finds the local Aborigines different from any other native peoples he has encountered. Unwilling to trade and difficult to understand, they are fiercely protective of their homeland.

Defining moment

In search of the Southern Continent

13 July 1772

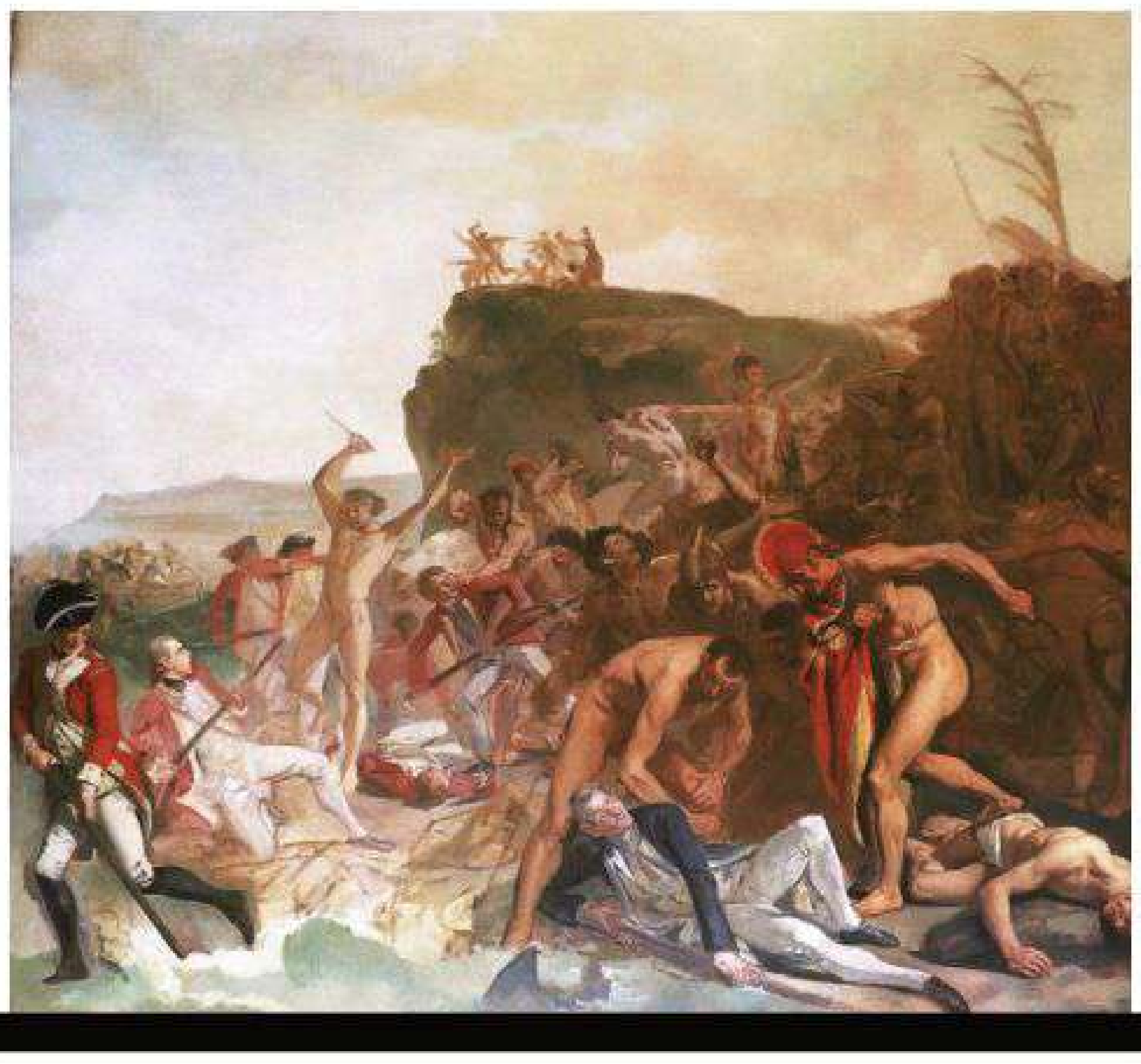
Stories told of a legendary Southern Continent known as Terra Australis, and Cook has been entrusted with the task of finding it. Dodging icebergs and traversing ice fields, the two ships Adventure and Resolution manage to reach the Antarctic Circle but are forced to turn back due to thick fog and sub-zero temperatures. The two ships are separated but manage to reconvene in Tonga after both turn north east to Tasmania and New Zealand in search of warmer climates. Further excursions would be attempted in the summer months, only stopping when the ships could go no further due to solid pack ice. With this, Cook returns home.

Meeting the king

Returning to Britain, Cook is rewarded with an audience with King George II. He is made a member of the Royal Society and promoted to post-captain. Within a year, he is exploring again.
1775

Final journeys

Aiming to find the North West Passage, Cook visits Tasmania and New Zealand, naming it the Cook Islands. He then travels to Oregon and Alaska, even touching the northern tip of Siberia. **1776**



1779

Untimely death

While visiting the Hawaiian Islands in February 1779, Cook is struck on the head and stabbed to death by vengeful islanders who are incensed at the crew's kidnapping of local monarch Kalaniʻōpuʻu.
1779

Cracking the slave trade

The key moments that led to the abolition of the long-standing transatlantic slave trade in Britain

Birth of an abolitionist

1 One of the most famous abolitionists, at the age of 25, Thomas Clarkson dedicated his life to ending slavery. His prize-winning essays attracted the attention of similarly minded people and the drive for abolition began.

Colonial resistance

2 Just as important as the abolitionists were the uprisings by the slaves themselves. Major revolts took place in Jamaica and Barbados among others and helped convince the slave owners and the British government that the evil practice should be abolished.

Political reform and economic change

3 After the American Revolution, the Americas suddenly became less important to Britain. As a result, the slave trade declined and industry within Britain increased. Also, individuals like William Wilberforce helped usher in a new type of politician who was pro-abolitionist.

Abolition of slavery

British territorial ambitions continue in Canada and the Caribbean while slavery is finally given the boot by the empire

The loss of the American colonies didn't mean Britain had given up all of its interests in the New World. The 1774 Quebec Act ensured that Canada remained under the control of the Crown. Britain also retained its territories in the West Indies and its valuable sugar industry.

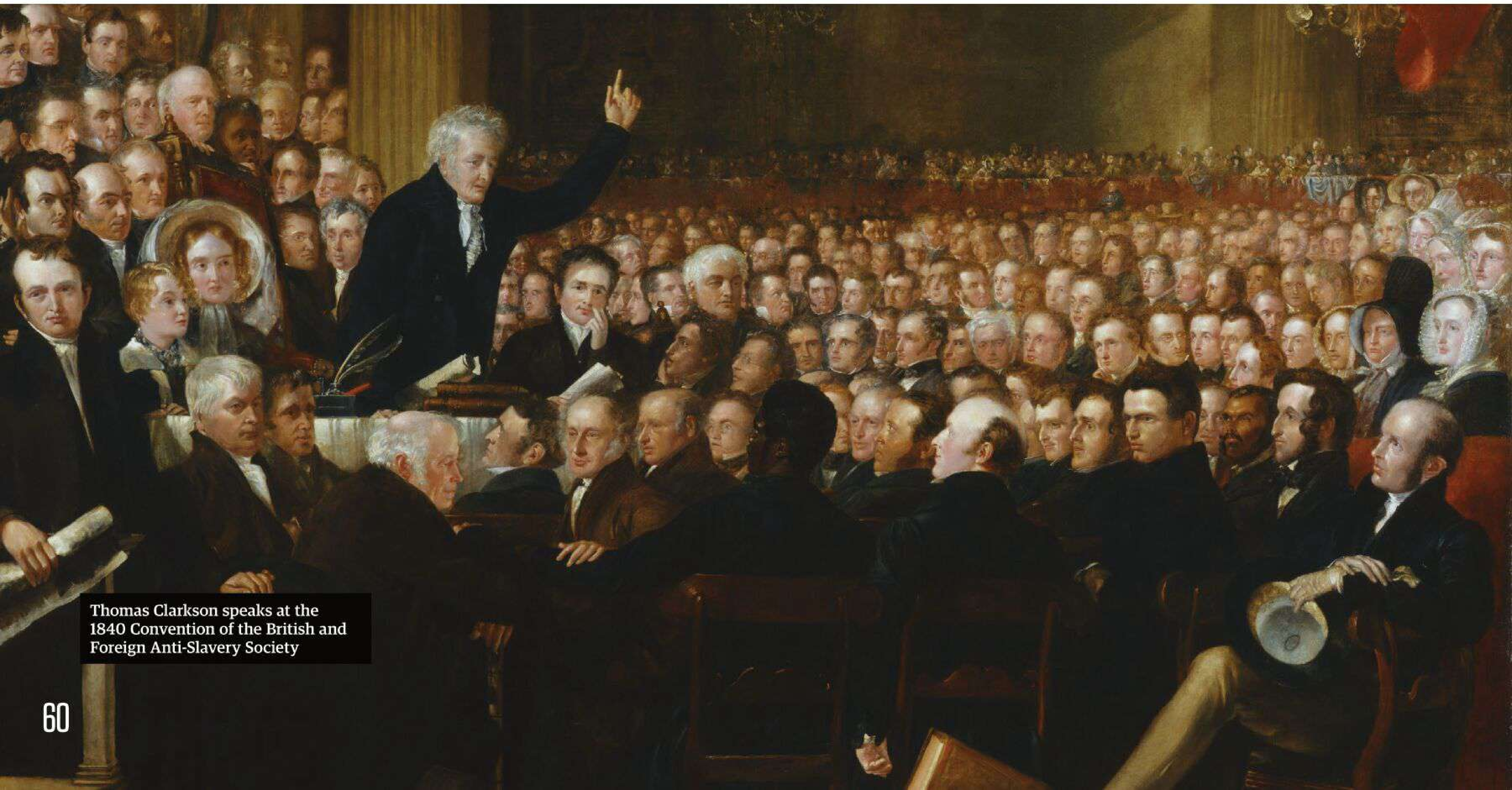
One of the main elements of European autonomy in the New World was the slave trade. A controversial business from its outset in the mid-17th century, by the late-18th, vociferous demands for its abolition had arisen. The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed on 22 May 1787 by 12 prominent abolitionists including Thomas Clarkson and George Fox. The movement started with the boycott of slave-grown produce and the production of anti-slave trade writings. Things escalated when African abolitionists began contributing to the effort.

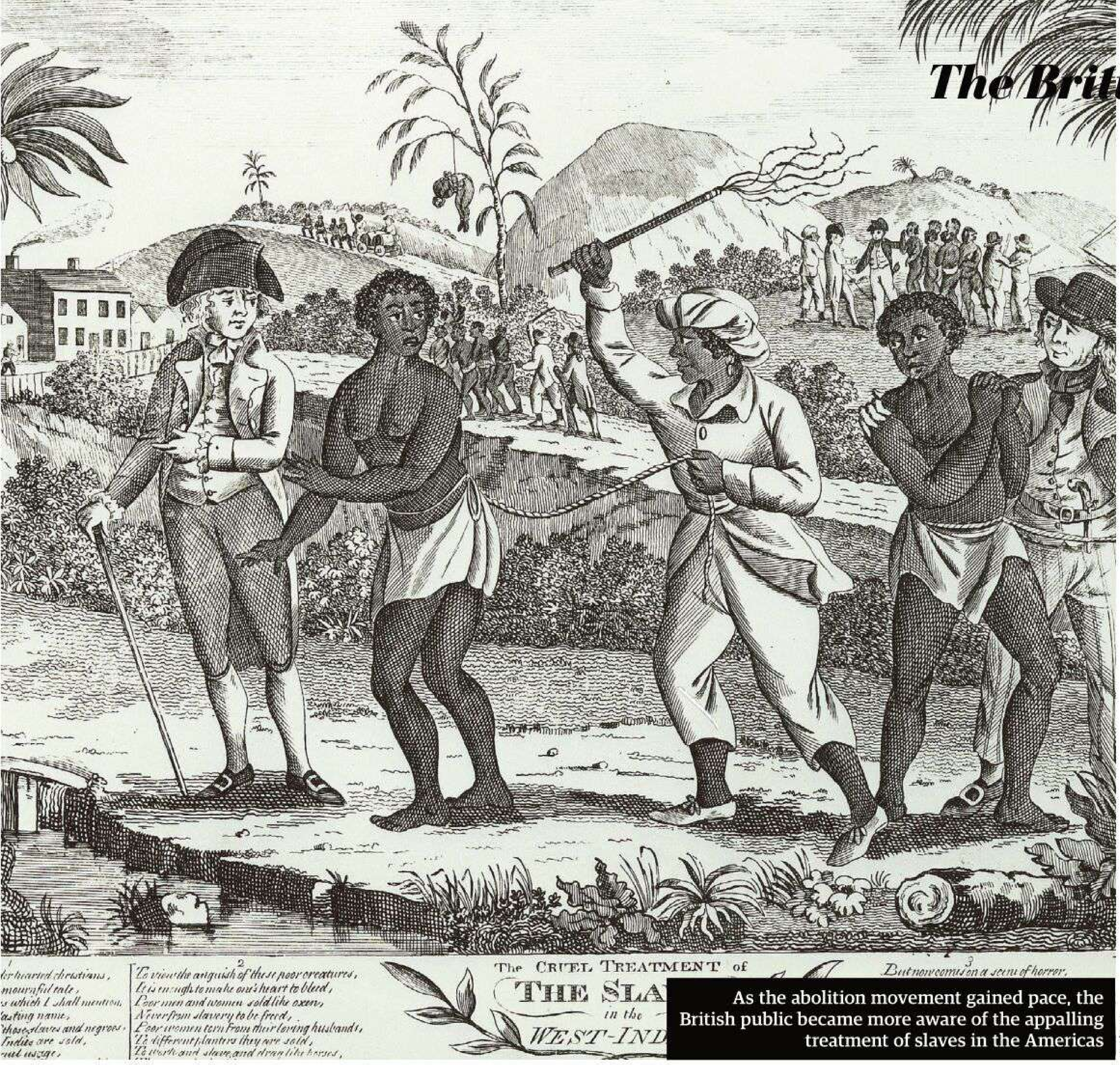
Ignatius Sancho, Ottabah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano were three prominent African abolitionists who all had texts published that helped heap the pressure on the British government to cease the practice. Their stories of being taken from their homes in Africa raised awareness of their awful treatment and the British public became more aware of what was going on. A group known as the Sierra Leone Company was even set up to help resettle former slaves and promote legitimate trade measures. The society gathered evidence of the atrocities after travelling to major British ports such as Bristol and Liverpool and held public meetings to raise awareness.

Perhaps the group's most important acquisition was an MP by the name of William Wilberforce. A dedicated social reformer, Wilberforce was close to long-standing Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger. Clarkson convinced Wilberforce to lobby against the slave trade, and for 18 years, the MP campaigned with a series of anti-slavery motions.

Granville Sharp was another leading abolitionist who fought for the justice of the slaves and soon joined with Clarkson. As important as the efforts

> Up until the 1807 Slave Trade Act, Britain had transported more slaves across the Atlantic than any other nation.


Thomas Clarkson speaks at the 1840 Convention of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society



As the abolition movement gained pace, the British public became more aware of the appalling treatment of slaves in the Americas

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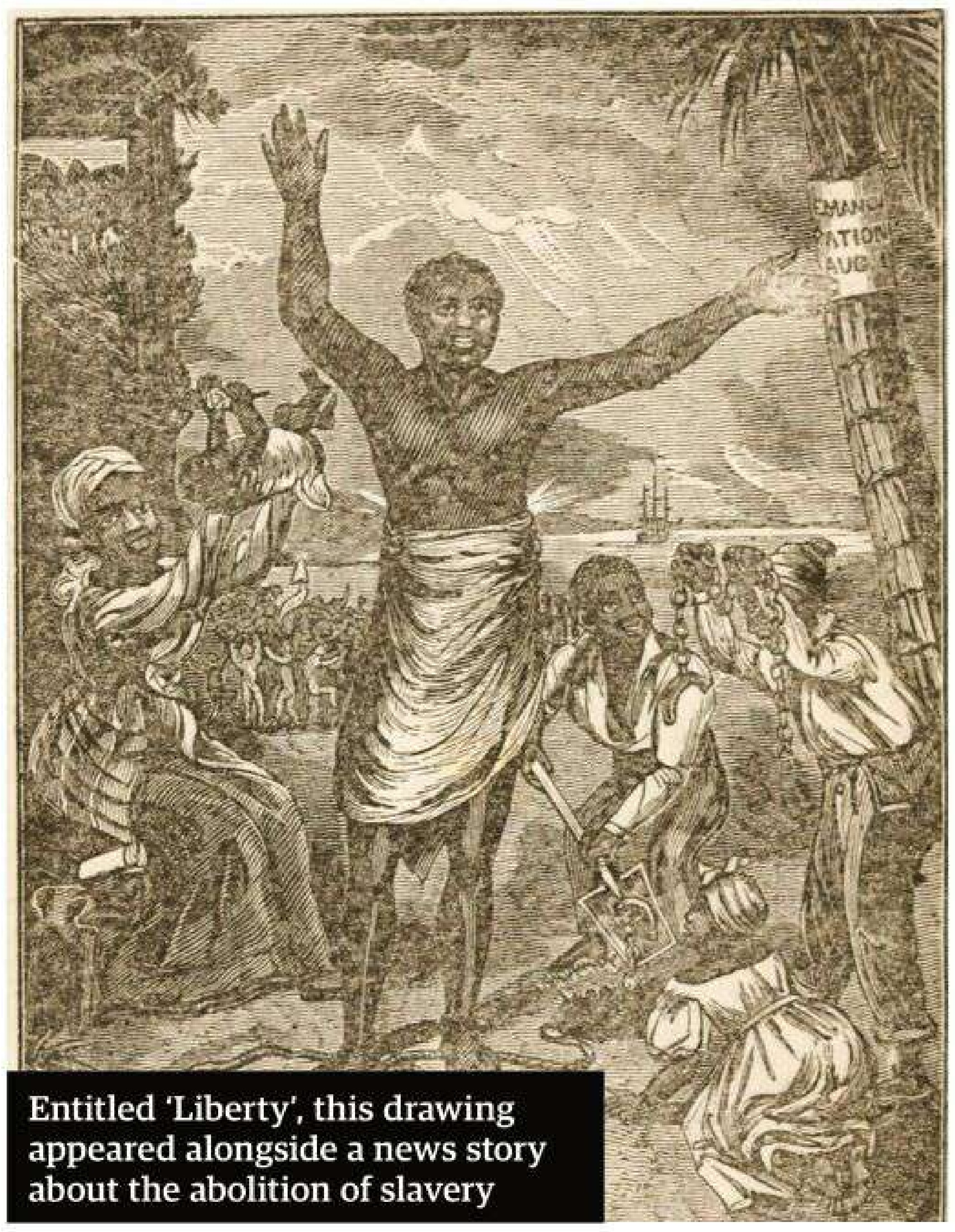
of these groups were, other factors were just as, if not more, integral. Soon enough, Britain's sugar industry in the New World began to decline as the USA traded with the French and Dutch. This helped end the need for the British transatlantic slave trade as well as instigating the growth of towns on British soil in the Industrial Revolution.

Revolts in the colonies themselves also persuaded the British government that the trade was more trouble than it was worth. The largest was in a French Colony in Saint Domingue in 1789, where a British attempt to squash the resistance resulted in the loss of 40,000 colonialists.

An abolition act failed in 1805 but a year later the Foreign Slave Trade Abolition Bill prevented the import of slaves by British traders into foreign territories. By 1807, a vote was finally called to decide the fate of the trade. By a count of 114 to 15 in the House of Commons, British captains who were caught would now be fined a hefty £100 for every slave found on board. Sadly, this caused an even worse practice, as captains who were in danger of getting caught would throw slaves into the sea in an effort to reduce the fine. A new anti-slavery society was formed in response and the trade was eventually abolished in 1833 after the Regency period had ended. The Slavery Abolition Act finally eradicated it from the empire's shores.

However, slaves initially weren't completely free, and were instead forced to work as apprentices by the government, with their owners paid a total of £20 million in compensation. Further campaigns helped end this system in 1838.

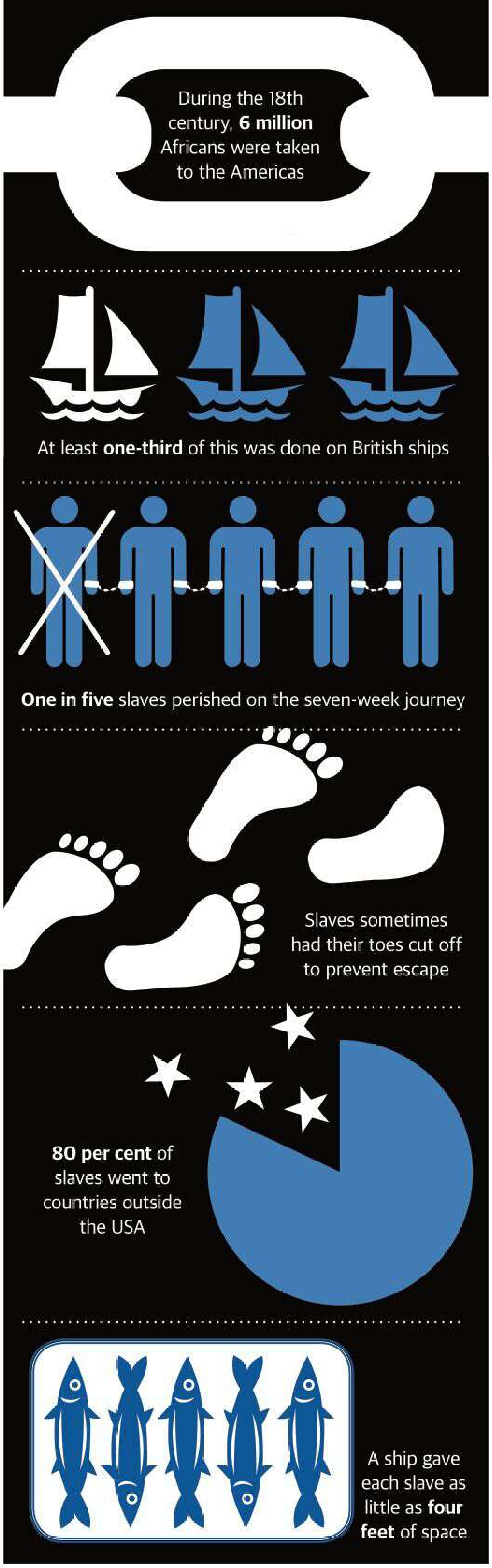
> "A British attempt to squash the resistance resulted in the loss of 40,000 colonialists"



Entitled 'Liberty', this drawing appeared alongside a news story about the abolition of slavery

The slave trade in numbers

Trace the bloody footprints of a grisly overseas trade in bodies rather than goods and products



During the 18th century, **6 million** Africans were taken to the Americas

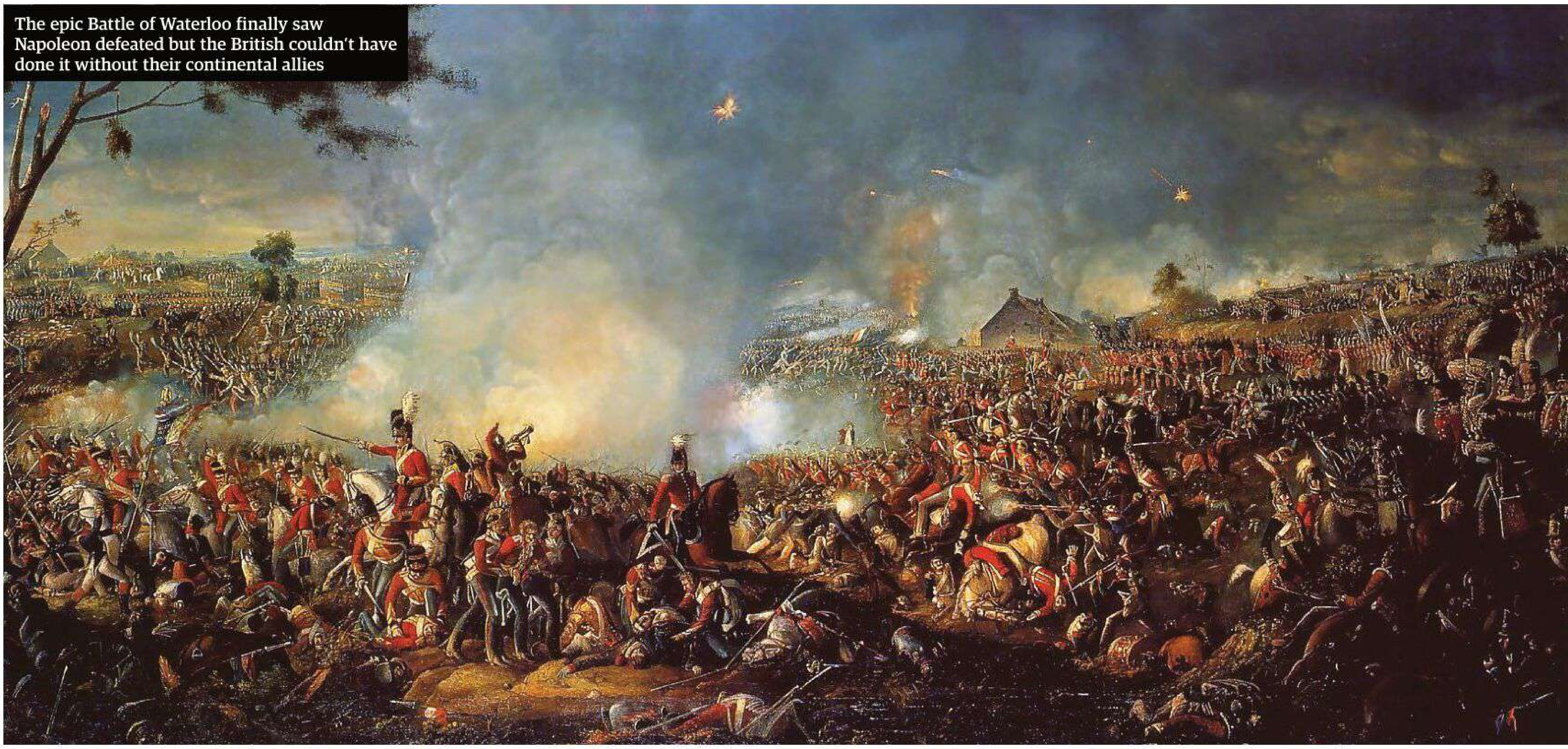
At least **one-third** of this was done on British ships

One in five slaves perished on the seven-week journey

Slaves sometimes had their toes cut off to prevent escape

80 per cent of slaves went to countries outside the USA

A ship gave each slave as little as **four feet** of space



The epic Battle of Waterloo finally saw Napoleon defeated but the British couldn't have done it without their continental allies

Napoleon's plans for Britain

After French General Lazare Hoche's failed attempt to conquer Britain in 1976, Napoleon himself took on the difficult task. Despite untimely mutinies at Spithead and Nore, the Royal Navy showed that it was still fighting fit when it easily dispatched of a Dutch fleet at the 1797 Battle of Camperdown. Another naval victory at the Battle of the Nile the following year seemingly ended the French threat to the British mainland, but by 1803, Napoleon had amassed another army, this time a mighty 130,000 men. Britain was also by this time equipped with modern coastal defences. Despite the French show of strength at Calais, key losses such as Trafalgar in 1805 prevented Napoleon from ever initiating an attack. Britain was once again safe from foreign invasion.

Britain and the Napoleonic Wars

The Second British Empire's greatest rival was Napoleonic France, whose Emperor had his sights set on conquest and war

The First French Empire was the biggest ever threat to the Second British Empire. Rising from the ashes of the Bourbon Dynasty, the new republic set about invading large swathes of territory. To repel this new republic, Britain became a member of a series of coalitions with other European powers.

The British initially found it difficult to wade into affairs on the continent, and defeat at the Battle of Hondschoote in 1793 set the tone for the failed First Coalition. Britain still had power on the seas, but by 1797, it stood alone after the Prussians, Austrians and Spanish were defeated by Napoleon. The subsequent War of the Second Coalition ended in the 1802 Treaty of Amiens but the peace was short lived. A Third Coalition was called against France in 1805. Boosted by an alliance with Spain, Napoleon wanted to finally kick Britain out of the war. The Battle of Trafalgar that year was a deathblow to French naval ambitions, but despite this victory, Britain was not backed up by its allies; a Napoleon tactical masterclass at Ulm and Austerlitz ended in the destruction of the Austrian and Russian armies. Napoleon was the undisputed master of Europe.

The next few years saw Berlin and Vienna fall to the French, as well as many Italian kingdoms. For the majority of the Fourth Coalition, Britain watched on as the French scored victories all over Europe. It did, however, make a vital intervention when the navy captured the Danish fleet in Copenhagen in 1807. Denmark now sided with the French, but if these vessels had got into French hands, it would have gone far in replacing what was lost at Trafalgar.

Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, HMS Victory, was created from 6,000 trees and contained 26 miles of rope

By the time of the Fifth Coalition, France held supremacy over Central Europe and only the Austrian Empire stood against them. British action against the French was restricted to naval battles off Iberia as the Peninsular War got under way.

British troops were almost instantly thrown off the peninsula when they were defeated at Corunna in January 1809. Without Austria's timely attack on the eastern border of France, the British would have likely been routed. The Austrian attack caused so much concern to the French hierarchy that Napoleon never revisited the Iberian theatre of war. His absence was critical in the British gaining the ascendency in Spain. Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, commanded the British forces and ensured the French would be vanquished from Spain once and for all. By 1814, the last of the Grande Armée had retreated north of the Pyrenees.

Throughout the war, the Royal Navy was essential in supplying troops and constantly harassed French merchant shipping and coastal batteries. The conflict morphed into a battle of two systems: the French continental bloc versus British naval blockades. Spain was torn between pro- and anti-Napoleonic factions but Austria's intervention, as well as the ill-fated French march to Russia, helped win the war for the Fifth Coalition.

Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of French troops due to an incredibly effective Russian scorched-earth tactic and the severity of the Russian winter climate. The timing was perfect for the British, whose armies were held up in the War of 1812. French hegemony over Europe was now in a state of constant decline and the British Empire would revel in its deterioration.

Napoleon's exile on the island of Elba was instigated by the 1814 Treaty of Fontainebleau. But after his infamous escape, he regained popular support and the journey to Waterloo was begun…

Battle of Austerlitz

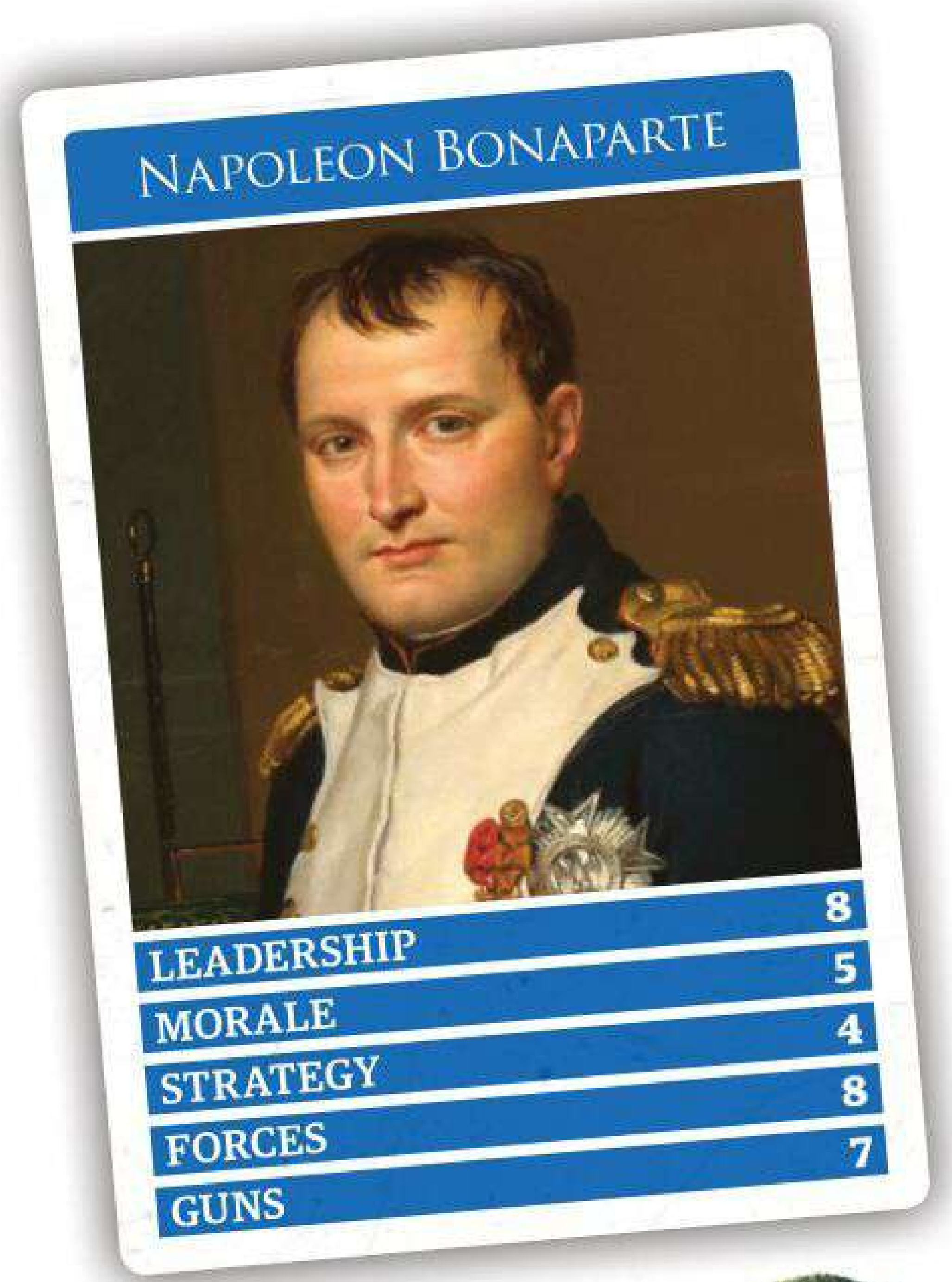
The 1805 Battle of Austerlitz was a conflict that knocked Britain's allies to their knees and confirmed French supremacy of Europe. A battle that shook the world, it demonstrated the power of Napoleon and the weakness of the monarchies of old in an age dominated by revolution. The French were up against the formidable forces of the Holy Roman Empire and the Russian Empire. It was 68,000 against 90,000 but the old monarchies didn't have the military mind of Napoleon on their side. The French emperor laid out a trap by faking a retreat, luring the enemy away from the centre of the field. As the French flank held off these fooled divisions, a scintillating attack was launched in the centre. It was so effective that it split the Russian and Austrian forces in two.

Divided and with no communication from above, the Grande Armée launched into the enemy and slaughtered them. The panic and mass retreat meant many perished in the frozen lakes that surrounded the battlefield. 15,000 Austrians and Russians were dead with a further 11,000 captured. The Holy Roman Empire was all but over and the Russians retreated back east. Now it was the turn of the Prussians to stand up to the First French Republic.

Napoleon was the scourge of Europe and one of the empire's fiercest ever foes

Battle of Waterloo: Napoleon's last stand

The critical battle that brought an end to the Napoleonic era and sent the First French Empire into oblivion



The hero had returned. After his exile, Napoleon was ready to lead his country to glory once again. With his army divided into three, Napoleon hoped to crush both Wellington's British divisions and Blücher's Prussian forces at Waterloo on 18 June 1815. The battlefield was drenched with rain and the soldiers on both sides were soaked to the skin. Napoleon had been up all night in his quarters, contemplating every possible move. He knew full well that this would be the last roll of the dice.

The British Army lay in wait with their back to a ridge. They numbered 25,000 men, but their ranks were also boosted significantly by regiments from Hanover, Nassau and Brunswick allies, who totalled 44,000. Despite having fewer men, the French had much superior artillery with 250 guns to 160. This Grande Batterie would kick-start the battle in a hail of cannon fire.

The artillery barrage smashed into the British lines as the Grande Batterie unleashed all its might. The Coalition soldiers were well shielded but a second front needed to be opened quickly. Men assembled in the nearby Hougoumont farmhouse and fierce fighting broke out in this compound to the side of the main battlefield. As the main artillery batteries fought on in the centre, Napoleon sent his brother, Jerome, to take Hougoumont. This small diversion soon grew into a mass battle as the French attackers were beaten back time after time by the valiant farmhouse defenders.

As the struggle for Hougoumont went on, the French infantry were deployed. The cannon fire ceased as French commander d'Erlon's 20,000 infantrymen crashed into the British squares. Another farmhouse, La Haye Sainte, was overrun as the Coalition's 95th Rifles and King's German Legion were pushed back. Relief came in the form of British heavy cavalry led by the Earl of Uxbridge, who trampled down the infantry. The attack was timed to the minute as Wellington's centre was bordering on collapse, but their overconfidence got the better of them and the attack on the French artillery was a bridge too far. With the horses' hooves bogged down in the heavy mud, a combination of the artillery and a wave of French cuirassiers felled the exhausted British cavalry. The battle was about to take another turn as Napoleon's horsemen set their sights on Wellington's infantry.

The infantry fixed their bayonets and gritted their teeth, ready for the inevitable charge. Wellington ordered his men into squares. Compact and close knit, the tactic was a complete success and blunted Marshal Ney's 8,000 strong cavalry. After this victory, the tide turned further against Napoleon as 50,000 Prussians amassed on the east of the battlefield at Plancenoit. Blücher had kept to his word. French commander Lobau was sent to the French right as Cavalry General Kellermann took centre stage in the continued French cavalry attack on the squares.

These lancer regiments were much more deadly to the infantry and their long lances could counter the efficiency of the squares. Despite this, the advance was called off at 6pm as every wave lost its ferocity. As the Prussians pushed further and the British gained some much-needed respite, the final French hopes were with their best soldiers - the Imperial Guard.

At 7.30pm, the Imperial Guard faced off with two British brigades, and their supremacy in battle was soon told. However, numbers were now counting against the depleted French ranks and when a Dutch-Belgian unit sent a huge musket volley into the hearts of the Imperial Guard, the game was up. No quarter was given in the subsequent slaughter. Napoleon, meanwhile, had already fled the scene and contemplated his abdication.

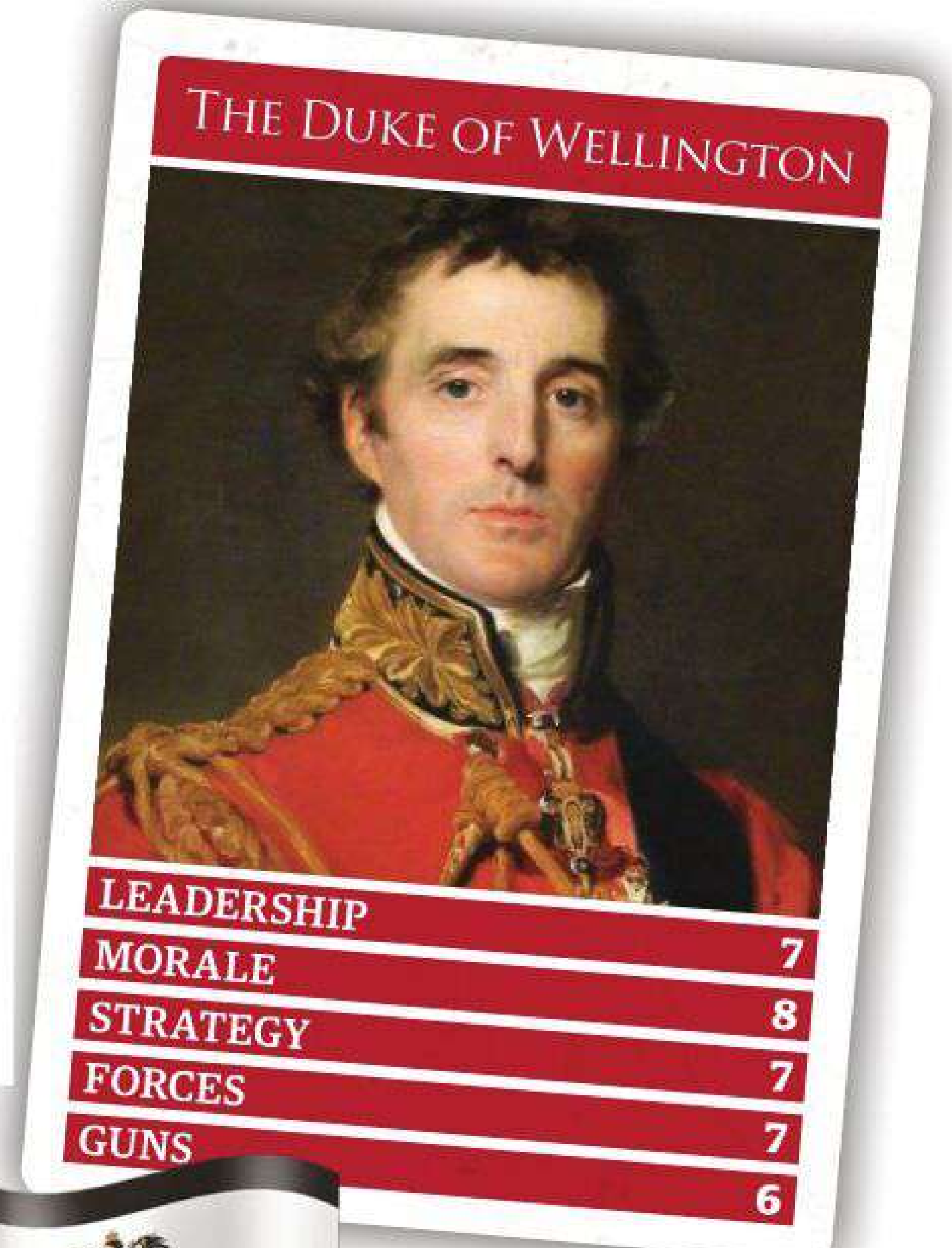
Explorer Matthew Flinders requested 'New Holland' change its name to Australia. His wish was officially granted in 1817

2. Napoleon delays
Napoleon is aware that Wellington has the stronger position, and the sodden ground makes moving his men and guns difficult. However, he knows that Blücher's Prussian army are steadily approaching the field. He decides to risk delay and waits until the ground has dried out. Instead, he launches an attack on the British at Hougoumont farm to make a dent in Wellington's steely defence.

7. The Prussian arrival
The French manage to break through the allied front line but Wellington's forces use their muskets to great effect. Finally, Blücher's forces arrive on Wellington's left and target Napoleon's right flank. The united strength of the British and Prussian forces overwhelms the French army and Napoleon has no choice but to retreat. His Imperial Guard are so loyal that they sacrifice themselves to give their emperor a chance to escape unharmed.

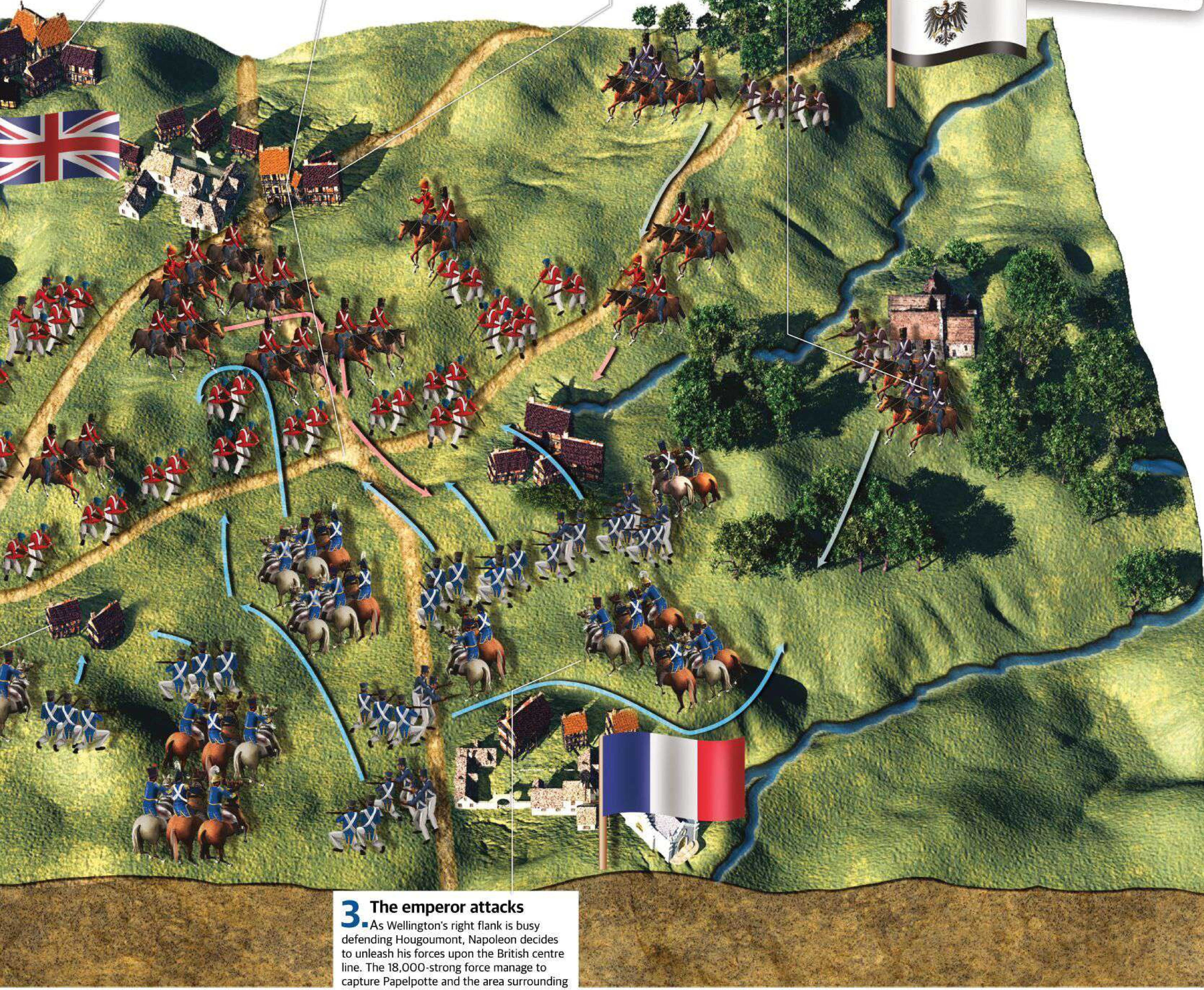
> "The artillery barrage smashed into the British lines as the Grande Batterie unleashed all its might"

> "A combination of the artillery and a wave of French cuirassiers felled the exhausted British cavalry"



THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

LEADERSHIP	7
MORALE	8
STRATEGY	7
FORCES	7
GUNS	6



1. Battle moves
The allied coalition stand on the north flank of the field and guard the eastern road. Wellington is counting on Blücher's Prussians to arrive – they are currently laying low 18 miles to the east. Napoleon meanwhile is on the march and on arrival he deploys his formidable corps on the battlefield.

6. La Haye Sainte falls
For hours, waves of ferocious French soldiers attack Wellington's stronghold of La Haye Sainte. Finally, at about 6pm, they are victorious, although the cost is heavy in both French and British lives. With his new position gained, Napoleon is able to use artillery to attack the British centre.

4. Wellington struggles
Although the Prussians are approaching, they are still a good while away and Wellington struggles to drive back the French from the crucial farmhouse of La Haye Sainte. The British cavalry charge into the advancing French infantry – the effect is disastrous for the French forces, who are substantially weakened, but Wellington's left line has also felt the brunt of the attack.

5. Battle on two fronts
At about 3.30pm Napoleon's troops finally meet Blücher's Prussians five miles east of the main fighting. Yet again Napoleon's troops are at a tactical disadvantage as the Prussians have the high ground. As the fighting intensifies, Napoleon is forced to commit more men to the Prussian battle, significantly stretching his forces.

3. The emperor attacks
As Wellington's right flank is busy defending Hougoumont, Napoleon decides to unleash his forces upon the British centre line. The 18,000-strong force manage to capture Papelpotte and the area surrounding La Haye Sainte. Victory seems assured. However, at about 1pm, Napoleon notices movement in the east. It is the Prussians.

10 bloodiest battles of the British Empire

The extended realm of England and Great Britain may have been built on the backs of economy and trade, but that doesn't mean the empire was afraid to stain earth and ocean red in its defence

No empire in recorded history has built its walls so high and extended its borders so far without shedding blood – both its own and those of its enemies.

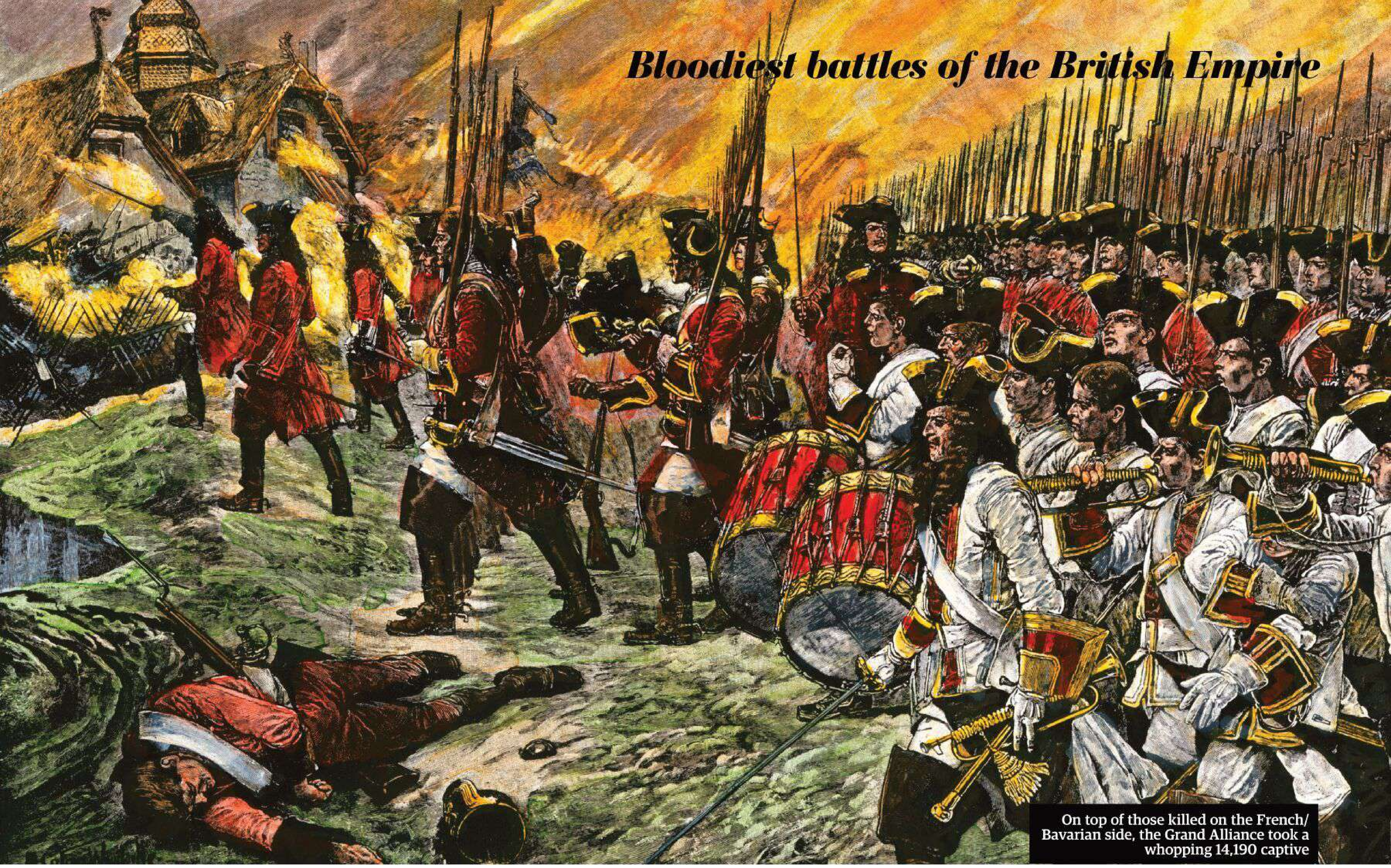
The British Empire, in all its forms, was no exception. From its very first forays outside of the kingdom in the late 1500s to its eventual deconstruction in the mid-1990s, Britain made war seemingly as much as it conducted trade or established new colonies. War and trade became the dual languages of the colonial eras and Britain spoke both with an unbridled fervour.

Those conflicts, much like its colonial expansions, took the empire across the world. Both over the sea and across lands new and old, Britain clashed with old enemies such as France and Spain and locked sabres with newer foes such as the Netherlands, the Zulus and the Patriots of America to name but a few.

Almost all of these military confrontations were bloody, brutal affairs. The world was in a state of change – new lands, rich with untold treasures and life-affirming resources, changed the status quo instilled in the Middle Ages.

Now any nation with a fleet of ships and imperialist notions could set sail and lay claim to a new land. Even the Netherlands – once a quiet nation of low profile – had used the rise of the merchant class to amass itself a considerable holding in land and resources.

> With the exception of the American War of Independence, Britain won almost all of its major wars and conflicts as an empire



On top of those killed on the French/Bavarian side, the Grand Alliance took a whopping 14,190 captive

Battle of Blenheim

13 August 1704

1

Fought from 1701 to 1714, the War of the Spanish Succession spread across Europe and into the colonies of Spain and beyond. Blenheim was one of the major battles of the conflict, and its outcome shaped the rest of the war while placing considerable doubt on the potency of the French navy and army.

Fought among a collection of villages in Blindheim, southern Germany, Blenheim saw Louis XIV of France attempt to remove the Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold I, from the war by seizing the capital of his empire, Vienna.

France, unbeaten in half a century of military encounters, marched upon Vienna under the command of brash French Marshal Camille, comte de Tallard. The French commander knew that both England and the Duchy of Savoy would mobilise troops to aid the Holy Roman Empire, but neither force was strong enough to challenge him, so he continued without hesitation.

Unknown to Tallard, English forces under the command of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, and an army led by Eugene of Savoy were marching to meet him. When the two armies joined forces and attacked Tallard on 13 August 1704, the French were forced to retreat to the Nebel River. The French army then split into two, one army led by Tallard and the other commanded by Marsin and Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria.

England/ Duchy of Savoy **V** **France/ Electorate of Bavaria**

Why: Attempt to capture Vienna and drive the Holy Roman Empire from the war

Outcome: Decisive victory for England/ Duchy of Savoy

Total death toll:

24,000

Marlborough then engaged Tallard's forces, while Eugene took on the Electorate of Bavaria. The French/Bavarian armies were linked by a line of cavalry, but it was thin and proved a weak point in the dual army's formation. Eugene's attack was more of diversionary tactic, as was a third prong of attack led by Marlborough's lord general John Cutts. With Marsin preoccupied and Tallard forced to commit some of his forces to support the Bavarian effort, Marlborough pushed an offensive into the cavalry in the centre of the enemy's formation.

With Eugene risking the stability of his own army to lend forces to Marlborough's charge, the attack proved too strong for the French/Bavarian effort and the two armies were cut off from one another. Marlborough's charge then drove Tallard's forces into the Danube. Tallard, along with 23 battalions of infantry and six regiments of Dragoons, were taken prisoner. Marsin managed to escape with part of his army, but by that stage the French/Bavarian offensive had been destroyed. While 4,500 English and Savoy troops died in the battle, a staggering 20,000 French and Bavarian infantry and cavalry were killed, drowned or wounded by the fight's end.

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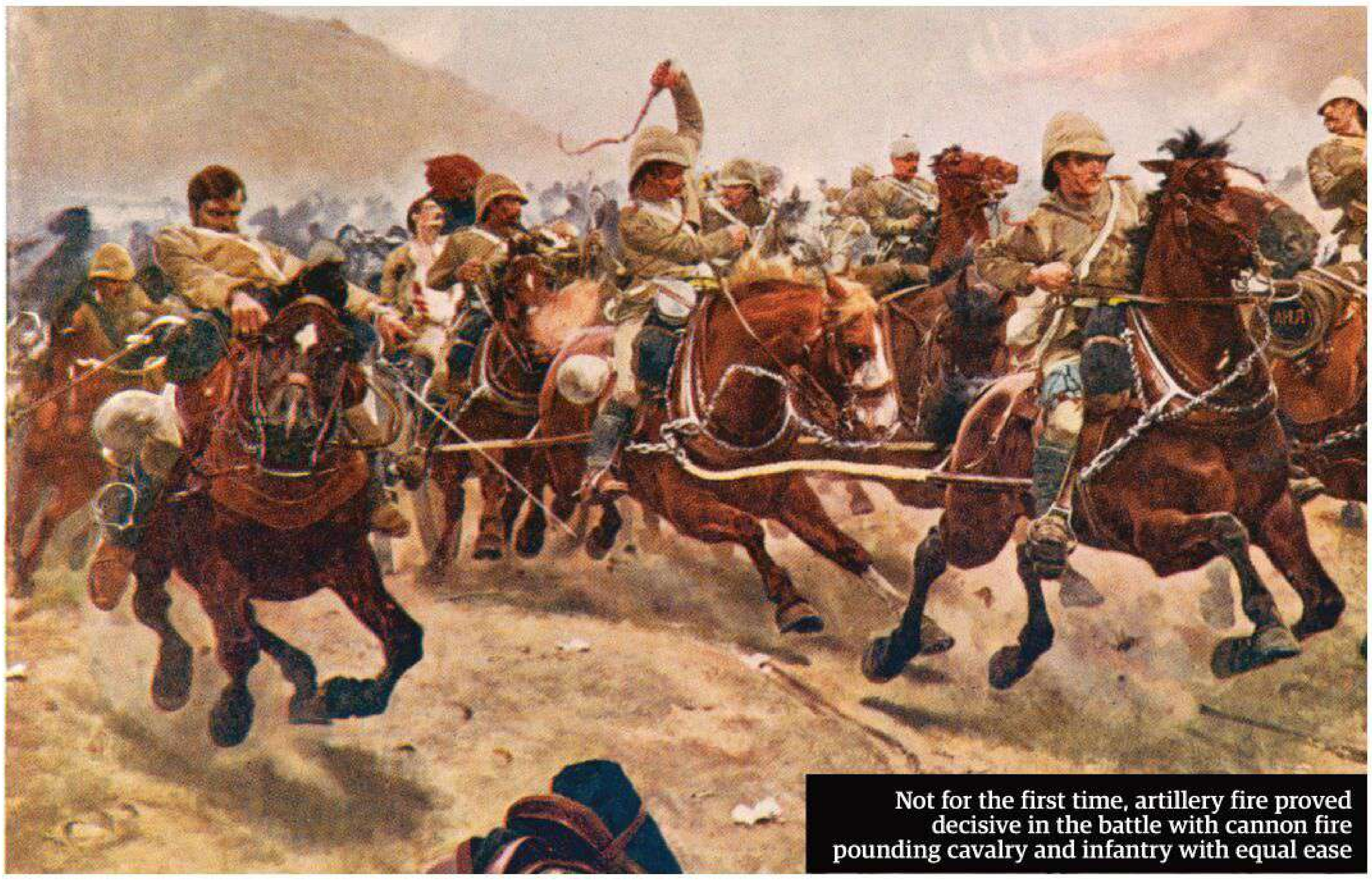
Battle of Maiwand

27 July 1880



Not for the first time, artillery fire proved decisive in the battle with cannon fire pounding cavalry and infantry with equal ease

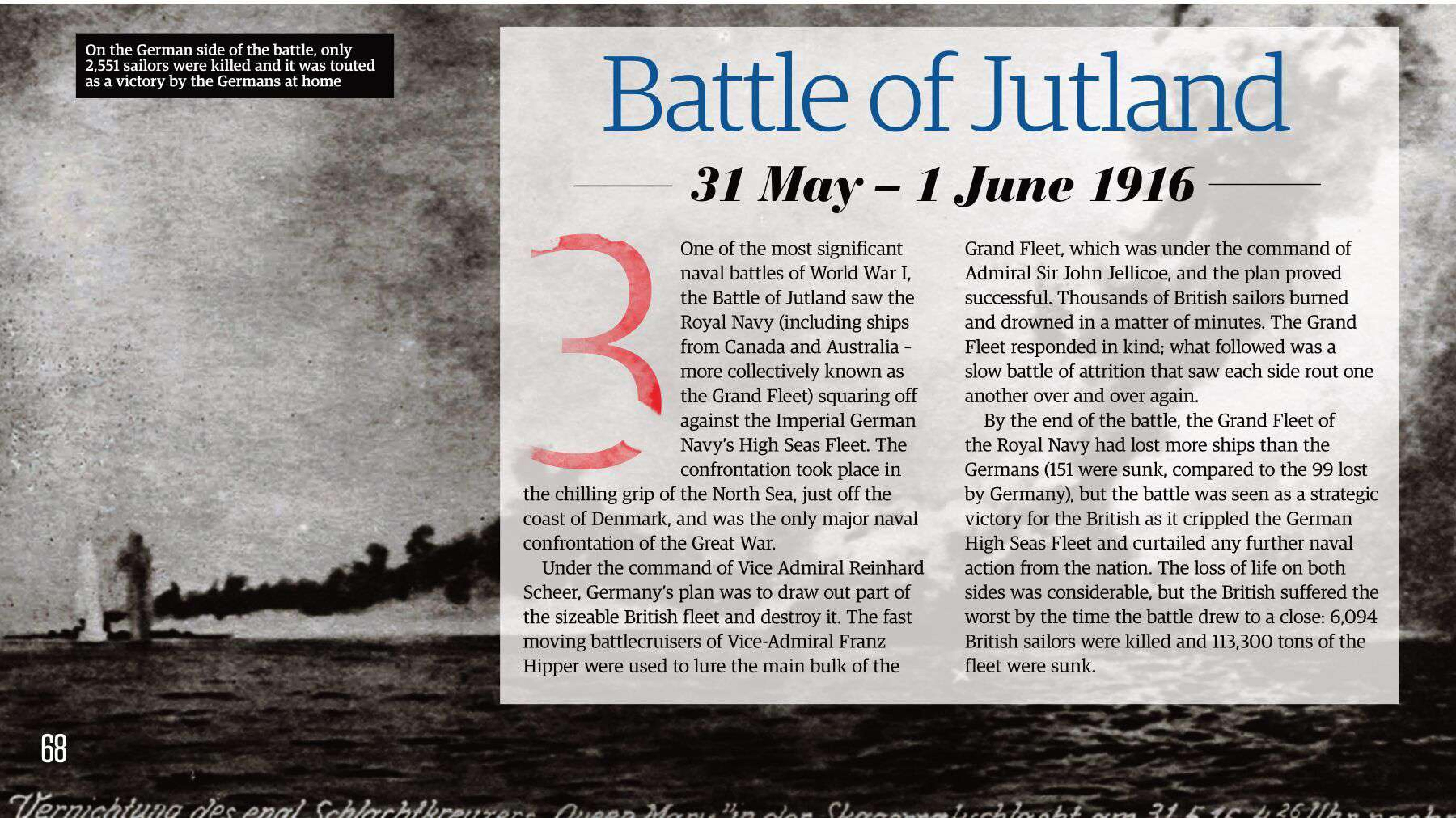
© Alamy

2 While the British Empire would ultimately stand victorious at end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80), the Battle of Maiwand would serve as one of the few successes for the Emirate of Afghanistan. But like so many battles in the wars between the Afghans and the British, such a victory would come at a painfully high price.

Prior to the battle, British military operations in the region were progressing well and the soldiers of the Emirate found themselves pounded by cannon fire and cavalry charges at every turn. In June 1880, Ayub Khan (the son of the Afghan ruler, Amir) set out to take British-controlled Kandahar with a small army. A 2,500-strong regiment under the command of brigadier-general George Burrows was sent to meet him and Khan's forces; battered by the British onslaught, they were forced to retreat to the Kushk-i-Nakhud.

At 10am on 27 July 1880, Burrows received word that Khan's forces would be heading for the Maiwand Pass, so he took his 2,500-strong force and rode to put down the Emir's son once and for all. However, Burrows' information was incomplete and it turned out that Khan had amassed a far stronger army at the Maiwand – 25,000 strong to be precise. With a set of powerful Armstrong cannons at their disposal, the British were driven back. A contingent of British artillery attempted to stem the tide, but they were soon overrun and the British were forced to retreat to Kandahar in shame. A relief force met the British on the way and the Imperial forces were routed.

By the end of the confrontation, 669 British and Indian forces had perished. It was a powerful victory for the Emirate, but they paid for that success with an estimated 3,000 dead Afghans.



On the German side of the battle, only 2,551 sailors were killed and it was touted as a victory by the Germans at home

Vernichtung des engl. Schlachtkreuzers „Queen Mary" in der Skagerrakschlacht am 31.5.16 4 26 Uhr nach

Battle of Jutland

31 May – 1 June 1916

3 One of the most significant naval battles of World War I, the Battle of Jutland saw the Royal Navy (including ships from Canada and Australia – more collectively known as the Grand Fleet) squaring off against the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet. The confrontation took place in the chilling grip of the North Sea, just off the coast of Denmark, and was the only major naval confrontation of the Great War.

Under the command of Vice Admiral Reinhard Scheer, Germany's plan was to draw out part of the sizeable British fleet and destroy it. The fast moving battlecruisers of Vice-Admiral Franz Hipper were used to lure the main bulk of the Grand Fleet, which was under the command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, and the plan proved successful. Thousands of British sailors burned and drowned in a matter of minutes. The Grand Fleet responded in kind; what followed was a slow battle of attrition that saw each side rout one another over and over again.

By the end of the battle, the Grand Fleet of the Royal Navy had lost more ships than the Germans (151 were sunk, compared to the 99 lost by Germany), but the battle was seen as a strategic victory for the British as it crippled the German High Seas Fleet and curtailed any further naval action from the nation. The loss of life on both sides was considerable, but the British suffered the worst by the time the battle drew to a close: 6,094 British sailors were killed and 113,300 tons of the fleet were sunk.

Battle of Omdurman

2 September 1898

4

A key punctuation point in the Mahdist War (also known as the War of the Sudan), which took place on the western banks of the River Nile. The British meant to make an example of the Sudanese, and did so with brutal efficiency. To call it a massacre would have been obtuse at best.

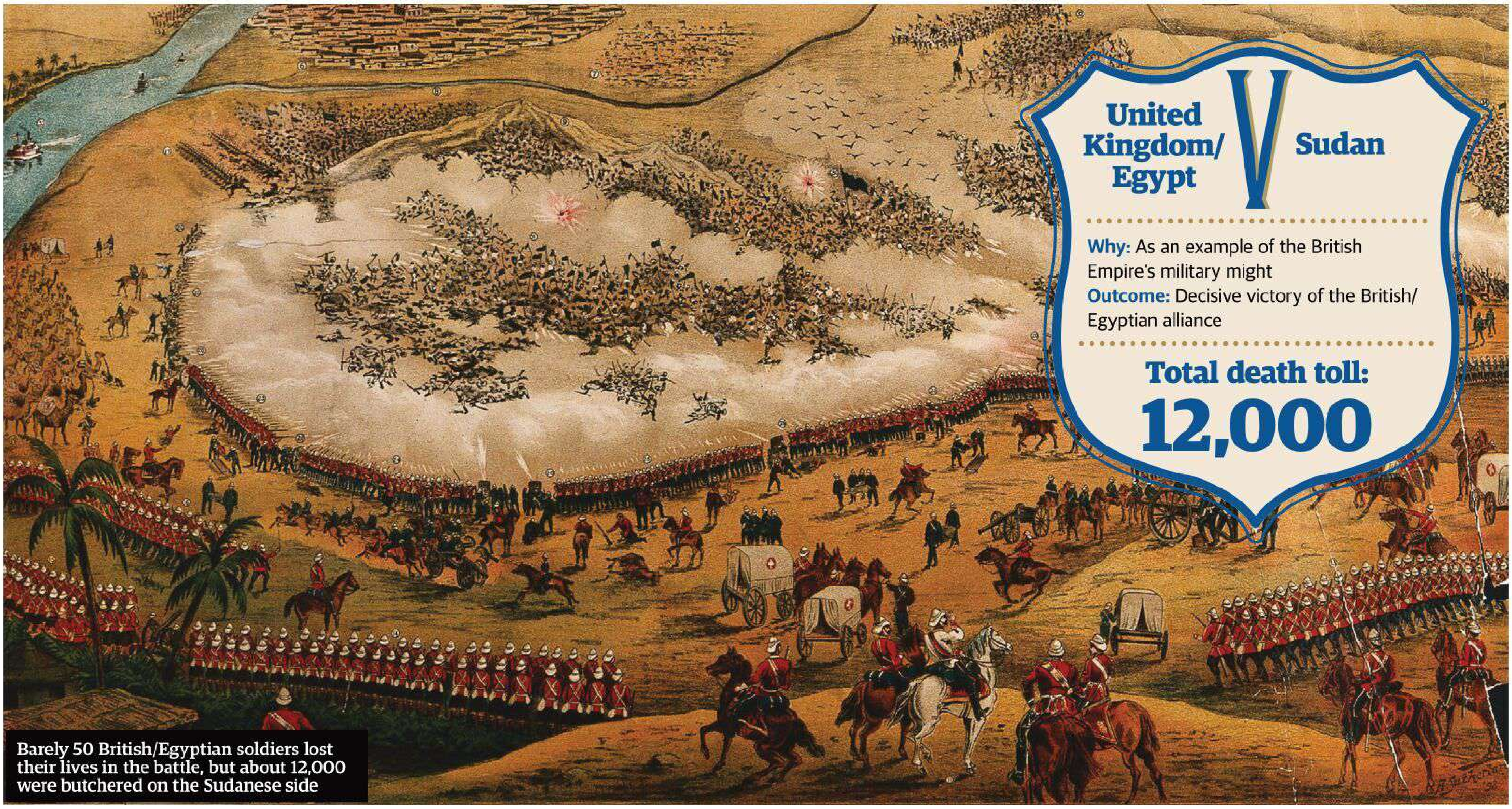
The battle itself was a reactionary move on the part of British General Sir Herbert Kitchener, who wished to punish the Islamic uprising for the murder of British General Charles George Gordon some 13 years prior. The war had erupted in 1881 when radical religious leader Muhammad Ahmad bin Abd Allah proclaimed himself the 'Guided One' of his people and rebelled against the heavy taxes and enforced hardships imposed by the Khedivate of Egypt (which was effectively controlled by the Ottoman Empire). The entirety of Sudan did not go to war – those who followed the Guided One were part of a large separatist group (known as the Ansar or the Dervishes) who acted independently of the rest of the country.

When control of Egypt passed into British hands in 1882, the uprising was in full swing and the empire had no choice but to send troops to put the insurrection to the sword. When Kitchener arrived in Omdurman on 2 September 1898, he came with a force of 8,000 British regulars and roughly 17,000 Egyptian and Sudanese soldiers. That considerable ground force was placed in an arc around the village of Egeiga, where 12 gun flotillas were floating nearby on the River Nile. The rebel forces, under the command of Abdullah al-Taashi, numbered about 50,000 and had been divided into five groups around the region. About 8,000 were positioned directly in sight of the British, with another 17,000 concealed behind the nearby Sorghum Hills, 20,000 to the north west and 8,000 on the right flank of the main army.

> "The effective tactics of the British eventually drove the rebels back"

The battle began at 6am with the first 8,000 rebel forces marching on the British – about 4,000 were cut down by British rifle and artillery fire. Kitchener then sent a 400-strong regiment of riflemen to clear out the fields in front of the city. But what was expected to be a few hundred dervishes turned out to be closer to 2,500. The clash was bloody, but the effective tactics of the British eventually drove the rebels back.

Such was the confidence of the British that Kitchener even allowed the Ansar to reorganise. A final force of about 15,000 soldiers marched on the main contingent of the British, attacking in a twin-pronged formation. Although part of the British line did crumble, it was soon reorganised and the rebels were slaughtered in a counter-offensive. A last ditch cavalry charge of about 400 men proved pointless in the closing hours of the battle. By 11.30am, the battle was won and the Ansar were crushed.



United Kingdom/ Egypt V **Sudan**

Why: As an example of the British Empire's military might

Outcome: Decisive victory of the British/ Egyptian alliance

Total death toll: 12,000

Barely 50 British/Egyptian soldiers lost their lives in the battle, but about 12,000 were butchered on the Sudanese side

Battle of Isandlwana

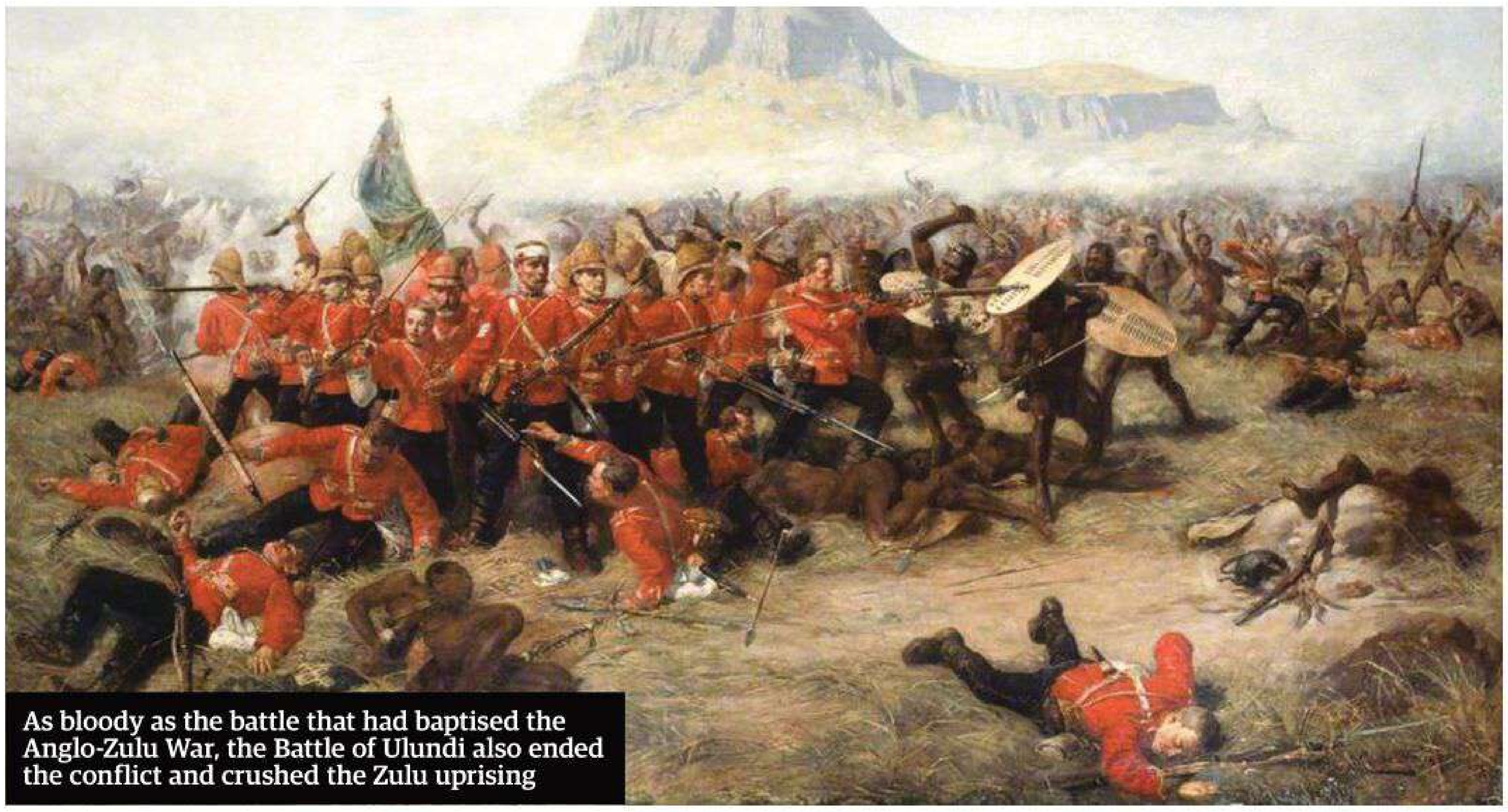
22 January 1879

5

On 11 January 1879, a column of 5,000 British regulars invaded the Kingdom of Zululand following a breakdown in negotiations to include South Africa in the empire. After 11 miles of marching, the army (led by the ambitious general Lord Chelmsford) made camp at a small hill called Isandlwana, but then inexplicably led two-thirds of his forces away to pursue rumours that the main Zulu army was massing nearby.

While Chelmsford rode off chasing phantoms, a 20,000-strong Zulu force was lying in wait just five miles away. Scouts from the camp spotted some of the tribal warriors and a message was sent to Chelmsford imploring him to return. Stubborn and unwilling to acknowledge the danger his camp faced, Chelmsford ignored the plea and continued his original plan. Meanwhile, a contingent of British cavalry had investigated the sightings and stumbled across the huge Zulu force lying in wait.

Their cover blown, the Zulus attacked and the 1,750-strong camp began fighting to defend itself from the droves of native fighters charging their position. Word reached Chelmsford again shortly after, but the general would not be swayed. Four hours later, the Zulus finally took the camp. By the time Chelmsford returned, he found a battlefield stained with British blood. Of the 1,750 defenders, 1,350 had been killed. The battle was the first of the Anglo-Zulu war and the severity of Chelmsford's tactical blunder would haunt him until his revenge at the Battle of Ulundi later that year.



As bloody as the battle that had baptised the Anglo-Zulu War, the Battle of Ulundi also ended the conflict and crushed the Zulu uprising

Battle of Long Island

27 August 1776

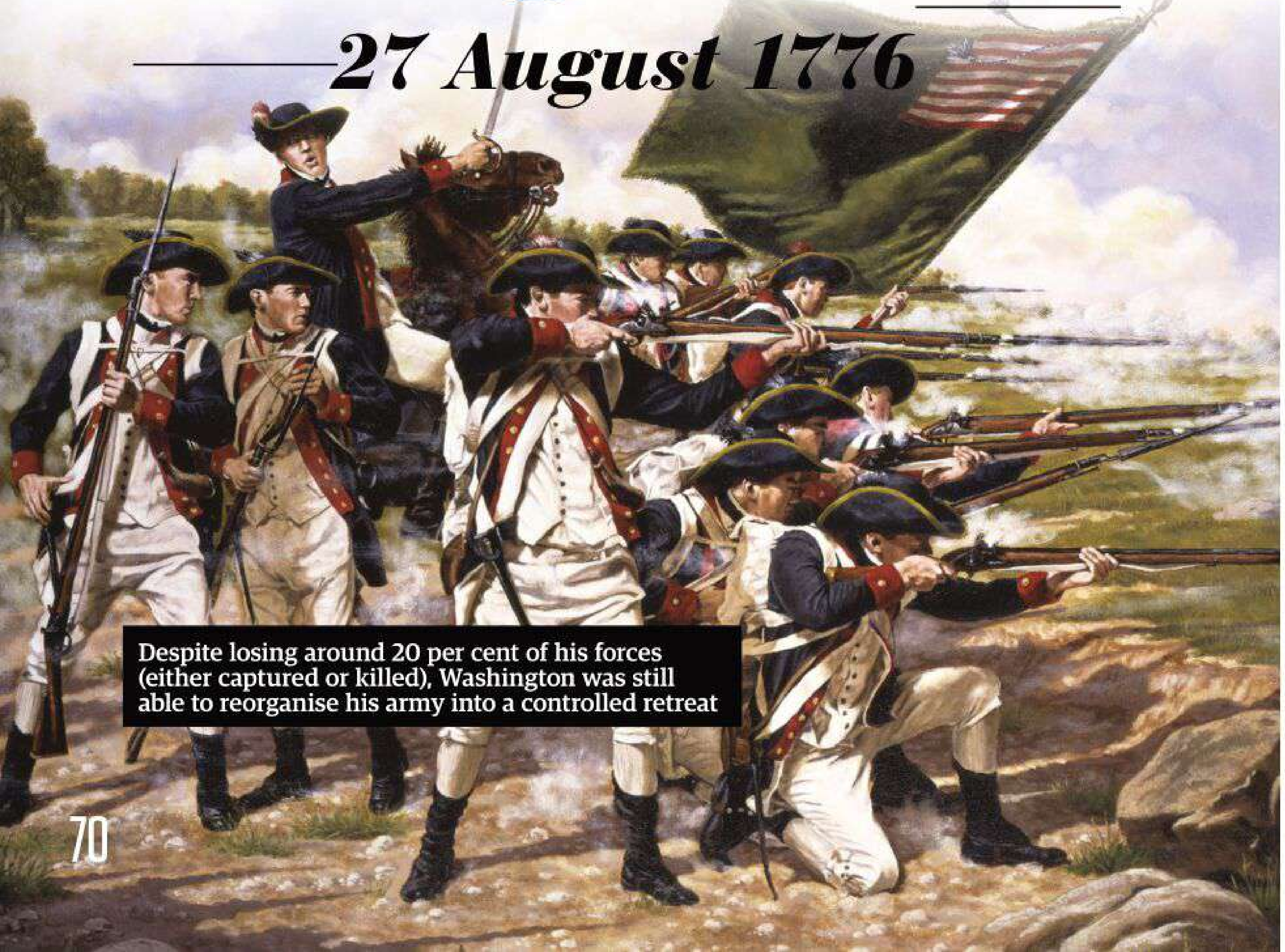
6

The American War of Independence (also referred to as the American Revolutionary War) would ultimately prove disastrous for the British Empire and cripple its hold on the Americas forever, but that doesn't mean the British war effort wasn't without its victories.

The Battle of Long Island was one such success and it saw the defeat of the Continental Army led by General George Washington. More importantly, it drove Washington's army into retreat and enabled the British to take the strategically important New York. Prior to the battle, Washington moved to secure the Port of New York following their defeat of the British at the Siege of Boston. The Patriot general knew the port would serve as a key tactical staging point for the British, so he moved the Continental Army to occupy the region. America had declared itself independent to the world a month prior, so the leaders knew the British were preparing to double their efforts to end the rebellion.

With a force of 32,000 regulars now massed at Staten Island under the command of General William Howe, Washington believed that Manhattan would likely serve as the first target for the British, so he moved the bulk of his army there in defence. After five days of waiting, the British suddenly attacked.

However, unknown to Washington, the bulk of the Howe's army was approaching the Americans from the rear. Suddenly besieged on two sides, the Patriot army dissolved into chaos and was eventually driven out of New York.



Despite losing around 20 per cent of his forces (either captured or killed), Washington was still able to reorganise his army into a controlled retreat

Battle of Oudenarde

11 July 1708

7

Often overlooked in the grand scheme of the empire's colonial exploits and military encounters, the War of the Spanish Succession was one of the most important eras for British colonial expansion. By the end of it, the empire's colonial portfolio had swelled exponentially. The war itself, which had divided Europe over who would inherit the powerful throne of the Spanish Empire, saw Great Britain in the Grand Alliance with the Holy Roman Empire, the Duchy of Savoy, the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of Portugal in support of Charles II's claim to the throne. On the other side stood France and Bavaria in support of Philip, Duke of Anjou. These alliances would shape the future of the continent and colonies further afield.

The Battle of Oudenarde saw the re-pairing of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy. The two had remained friends, which served as a contrast to the French commanders who would lead an attack on the town of Oudenaarde. Seasoned leader Louis Joseph, duc de Vendôme and Louis, Duke of Burgundy, quarrelled constantly over where to progress next.

Despite their differences, the French army was massing speed. It had already taken a number of towns along the Scheldt River, and with the fall of Ghent and Bruges, only one Grand Alliance-controlled town remained: Oudenaarde. If it fell, Marlborough's forces would be cut off, and the French could finally hunt the British general down.

Much like their confrontation with the French at Blenheim four years earlier, the forces of Great Britain and the Duchy of Savoy attacked the French army before it could attack the town. Their forces combined, Marlborough and Savoy had 80,000 men at their disposal to attack the 85,000-strong French offensive. The French army had been stationed outside the town for months, remaining inactive while its leaders continued to disagree.

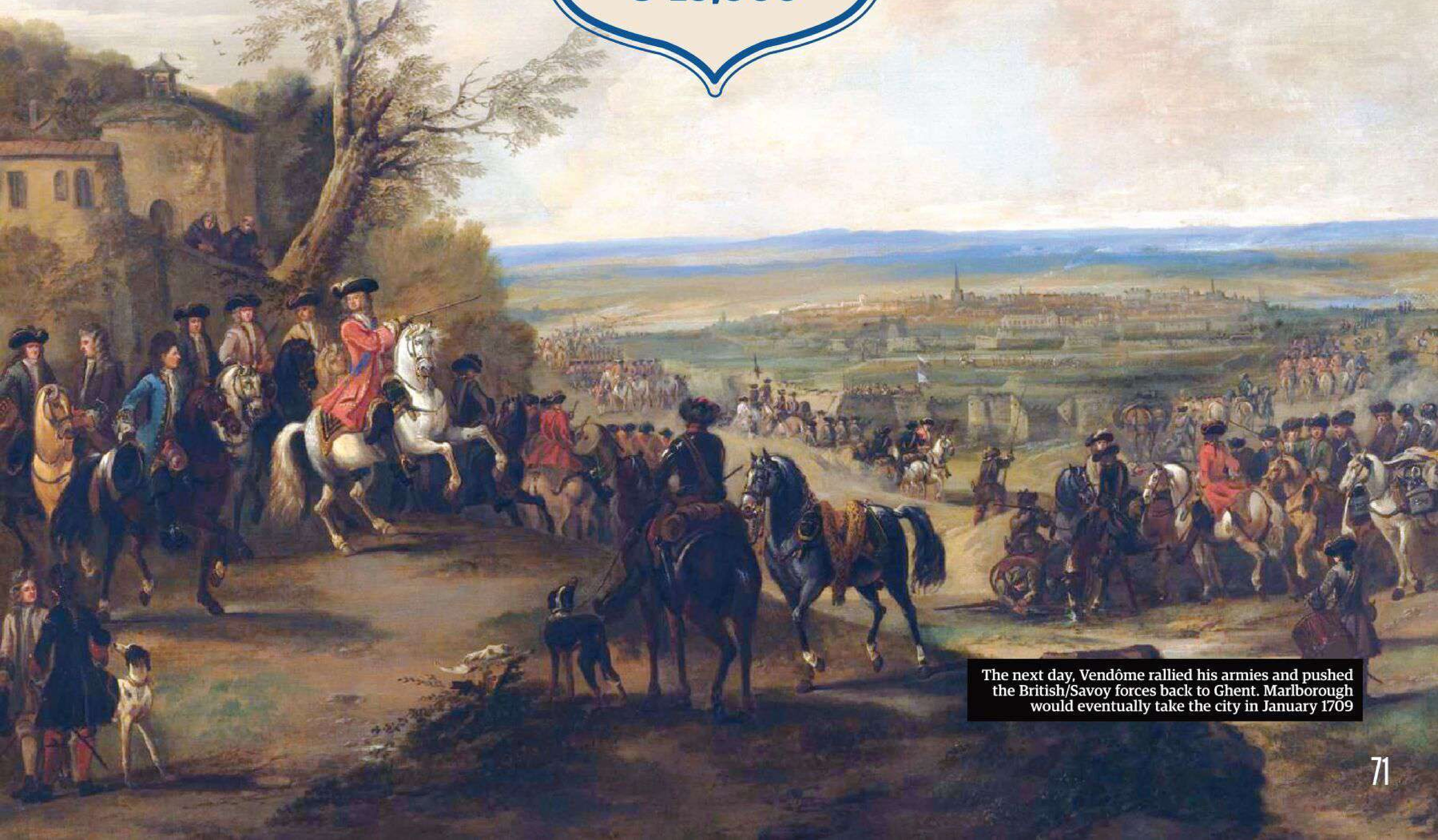
Great Britain/ Duchy of Savoy V **France**

Why: To control Oudenaarde and continue the War of the Spanish Succession
Outcome: Victory for Great Britain and the Duchy of Savoy

Total death toll:
9-10,000

The arrival of the British/Savoy forces caught the French completely off guard (the allied forces had marched a staggering 50 miles in 65 hours in order to maintain that element of surprise). Burgundy wished to counter-attack, but Vendôme wanted to retreat rather than risk unnecessary loss by committing to a fight. Vendôme eventually relented and a confused and stilted battle followed.

However, Marlborough had no intention of letting the battle grind into a fight of attrition and ordered a contingent of Dutch soldiers to head west and attack the right flank of the French. As the Dutch soldiers attacked, Eugene moved on the left and within a few hours, 6,000 French soldiers had been captured and another 9,000 taken prisoner. Both Burgundy and Vendôme retreated with what was left of their army, with another shameful defeat added to their careers.



The next day, Vendôme rallied his armies and pushed the British/Savoy forces back to Ghent. Marlborough would eventually take the city in January 1709

Battle of Trafalgar

21 October 1805

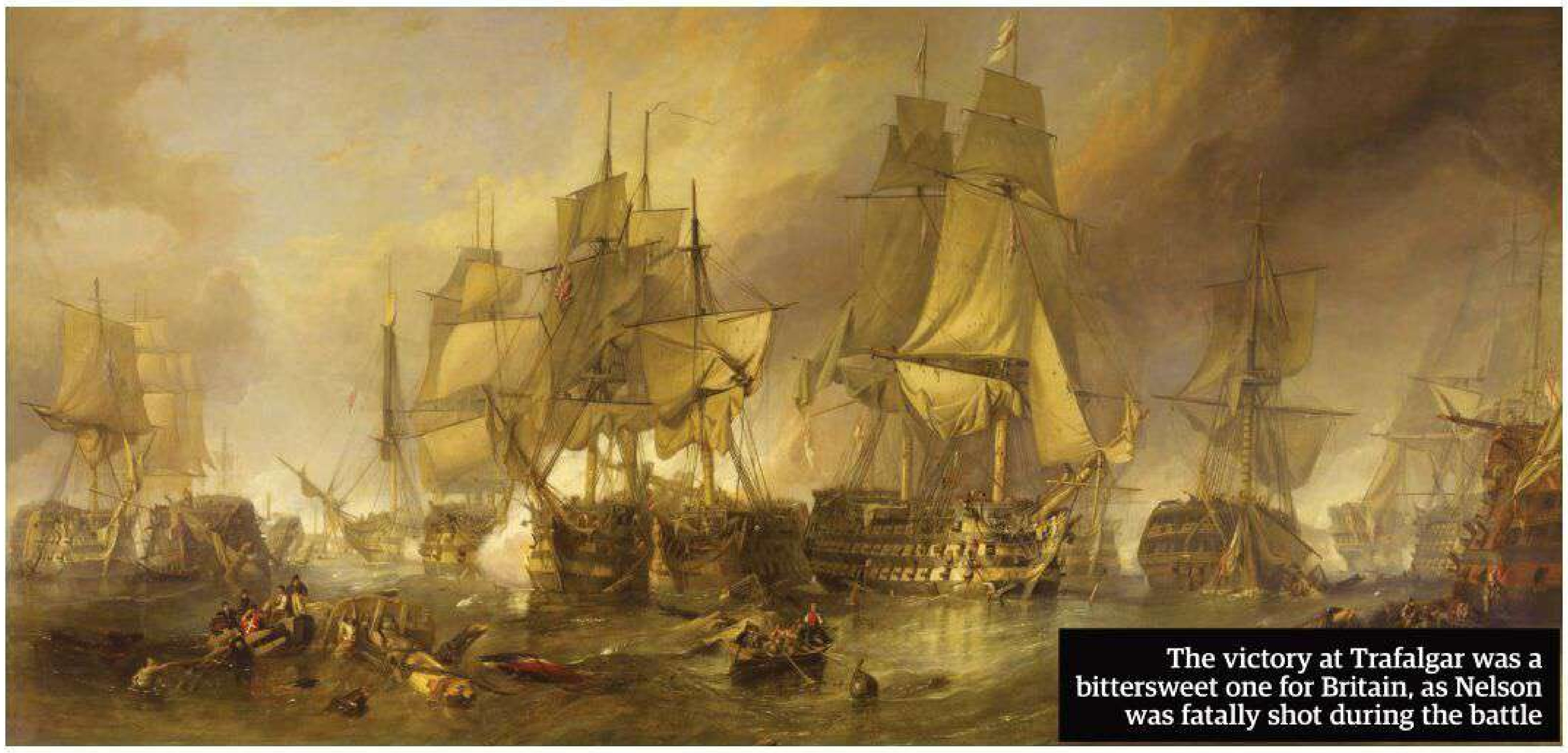
8

The Battle of Trafalgar saw the Royal Navy faced with the combined fleets of the First French Empire and the Kingdom of Spain. Napoleon had been planning to invade Britain, but the outstanding tactics of the British maritime effort had hampered his plot.

As Napoleon moved his fleet to Cadiz and began a land invasion of Austria, he ordered Vice Admiral Pierre de Villeneuve to sail a largely untested fleet to begin a new campaign in the Mediterranean. Unfortunately for Villeneuve, the most celebrated naval commander in the British fleet, Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson was waiting for him.

27 British ships under Nelson's command faced down Villeneuve's 33. Villeneuve, while unnerved by Nelson's presence, felt his forces were superior and stood his ground just off Cape Trafalgar. Nelson's success was largely based on his radical changes to British naval tactics, and he wasted no time by ignoring the usually broadside exchanges of the era and ploughing into the gaps between the French ships. The tactic forced the French ships apart and enabled Nelson to rake the enemy ships.

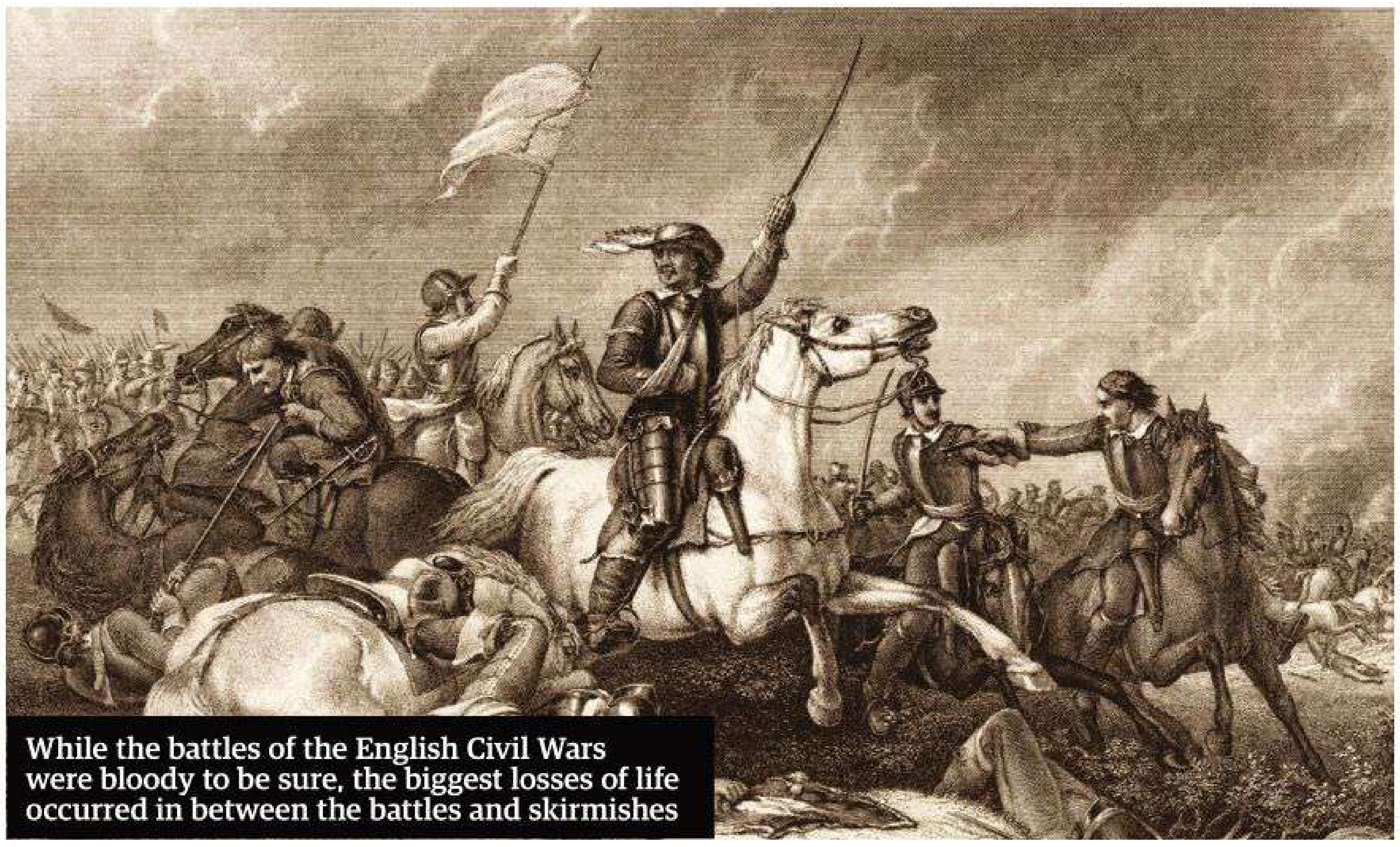
Villeneuve's stand was over almost as soon as it begun, and a total of 22 French ships were sunk or scuttled, while Britain emerged without a single lost vessel. British casualties numbered about 1,666 while the French limped away with a haunting 13,781 in casualties. The battle marked a huge turning point in the conflict with the French Empire and cemented Britain's navy as the most dominant in the world.



The victory at Trafalgar was a bittersweet one for Britain, as Nelson was fatally shot during the battle

Battle of Marston Moor

2 July 1644



While the battles of the English Civil Wars were bloody to be sure, the biggest losses of life occurred in between the battles and skirmishes

© Alamy

9

The English Civil War remains one of the most catastrophic conflicts in English history – in fact, the loss of English lives was so great that it would take more than 250 years for World War I to surpass its merciless body count.

The Battle of Naseby (14 June 1645), which signified the end of the Royalist movement and the defeat of King Charles I, is often presented as the bloodiest confrontation of the conflict due to the destruction of the main Royalist army – however, it was the battle at Marston Moor a year prior that proved to be the deadliest.

The north of England was a Royalist stronghold, containing a large proportion of the forces loyal to the monarchy, but the Siege of York between April and July 1644 and its subsequent loss to the Parliamentarian army proved a crushing blow that began to turn the tide against Charles's military offensives. Based in Oxford at the time, Charles sent his most trusted and effective commander, Prince Rupert, to relieve the besieged northern city.

Hearing of Rupert's mission to save York, the Parliamentarian forces broke the siege and pooled their forces at Marston Moor, North Yorkshire. Considered to be the largest military offensive of the entire conflict, the battle at Marston only lasted two hours but it saw huge casualties for the Royalists. A lack of organisation, brought about by a distrust of Rupert by the other pro-monarch generals, saw the king's men routed. By the end of the battle, about 4,000 Royalists had been killed and a further 1,000 captured. By comparison, only 300 Roundheads lost their lives. With that, the king's hold on the north was broken.

Battle of the Somme

1 July – 18 November 1916

10

The fact the Battle of the Somme has become synonymous with the bleak, unrelenting loss of life that is war only serves to further cement its status as the most destructive single confrontation in history. On those dank and dreary fields, warfare was changed forever – the proliferation of trench warfare, the rise of aerial combat and the game-changing arrival of the tank.

More than 1 million men died on that battlefield, a figure that would ultimately see World War I give rise to the greatest loss of English life since the English Civil War.

In the build up to the battle, the French war effort was not faring well. It was failing to make progress against the belligerent German Empire and was suffering significant losses at Verdun to the east of Paris. In order to relieve the crumbling French offensive, Allied High Command decided to launch an attack on the north of Verdun to divide the German forces and take the pressure off the French. The plan's secondary objective was all the more direct: inflict heavy losses on the Germans and drive them back.

A number of generals among the French and British military expressed their concern over the planned effort in the Somme. Both French General Ferdinand Foch and British General Henry Rawlinson believed the attack would achieve little, but orders had been sent direct from Allied High Command in London and Paris. It was decided: the Somme offensive would commence immediately.

The first day of the offensive began with a barrage of artillery fire that hammered the German lines with 1,738,000 shells. It was believed this tactic would annihilate the enemy positions, but the Germans had dug deep trenches and simply sought shelter until the barrage concluded.

British Empire/ France V **German Empire**

Why: To control a significant part of the Western Front

Outcome: Victory for the British and French empires

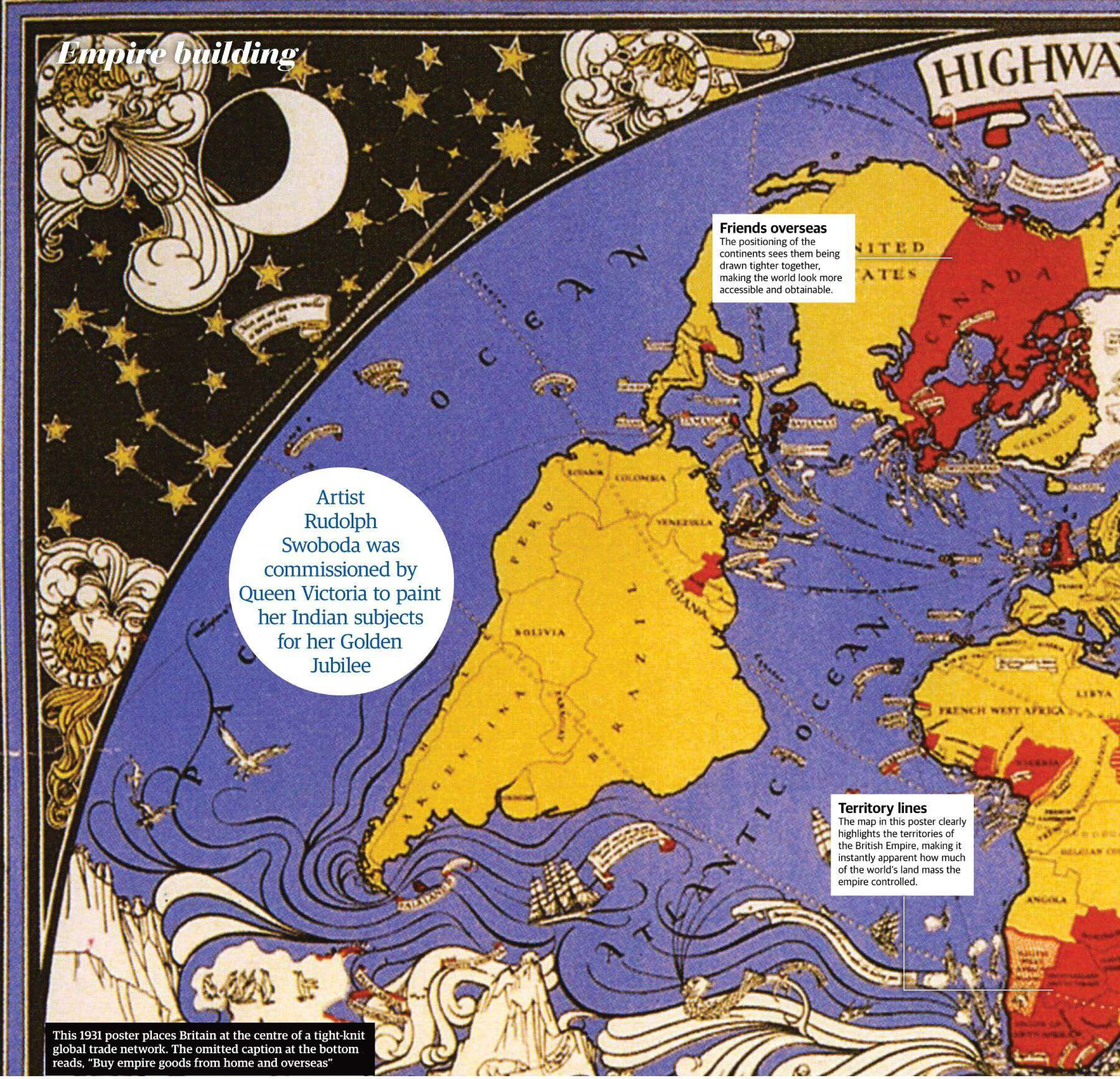
Total death toll:
1,115,000

It was then that the butchery started. Lord Kitchener, the secretary of state for war at the time, believed in war by attrition, and so he had no qualms sending men 'over the top' of the British trenches and into the no man's land between the two fronts. Such a tactic saw 60,000 Allied soldiers dead on the first day of the battle. Kitchener's tactics proved incredibly unpopular at home, with 88,000 Allied men dead for every mile of advancement.

Despite being referred to as a single battle, the Battle of the Somme actually consisted of 14 separate skirmishes across its four-month time frame. Yet while the Allies often suffered catastrophic casualties during their many offensives, the German lines were slowly forced back across the Western Front, contributed to by the inclusion of new experimental means of warfare, including the use of gas, machine-gun bombardments and tank-infantry cooperation.

The Battle of the Ancre (13-18 November) served as the final major offensive of the Somme and saw army reserves from the British Empire being pulled in to ensure the exhausted Germans were unable to respond. The German lines were pushed back further still, but with more than 1 million casualties combined, both sides left the conflict exhausted, broken and demoralised.

The Somme was the largest and longest single battle of World War I and helped make the Great War one of the deadliest conflicts in history


HIGHWA
UNITED STATES
CANADA
ALASKA
GREENLAND
OCEAN
PACIFIC
ATLANTIC OCEAN
ECUADOR
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
GUIANA
PERU
BRAZIL
BOLIVIA
PARAGUAY
ARGENTINA
LIBYA
FRENCH WEST AFRICA
NIGERIA
ANGOLA

Friends overseas
The positioning of the continents sees them being drawn tighter together, making the world look more accessible and obtainable.

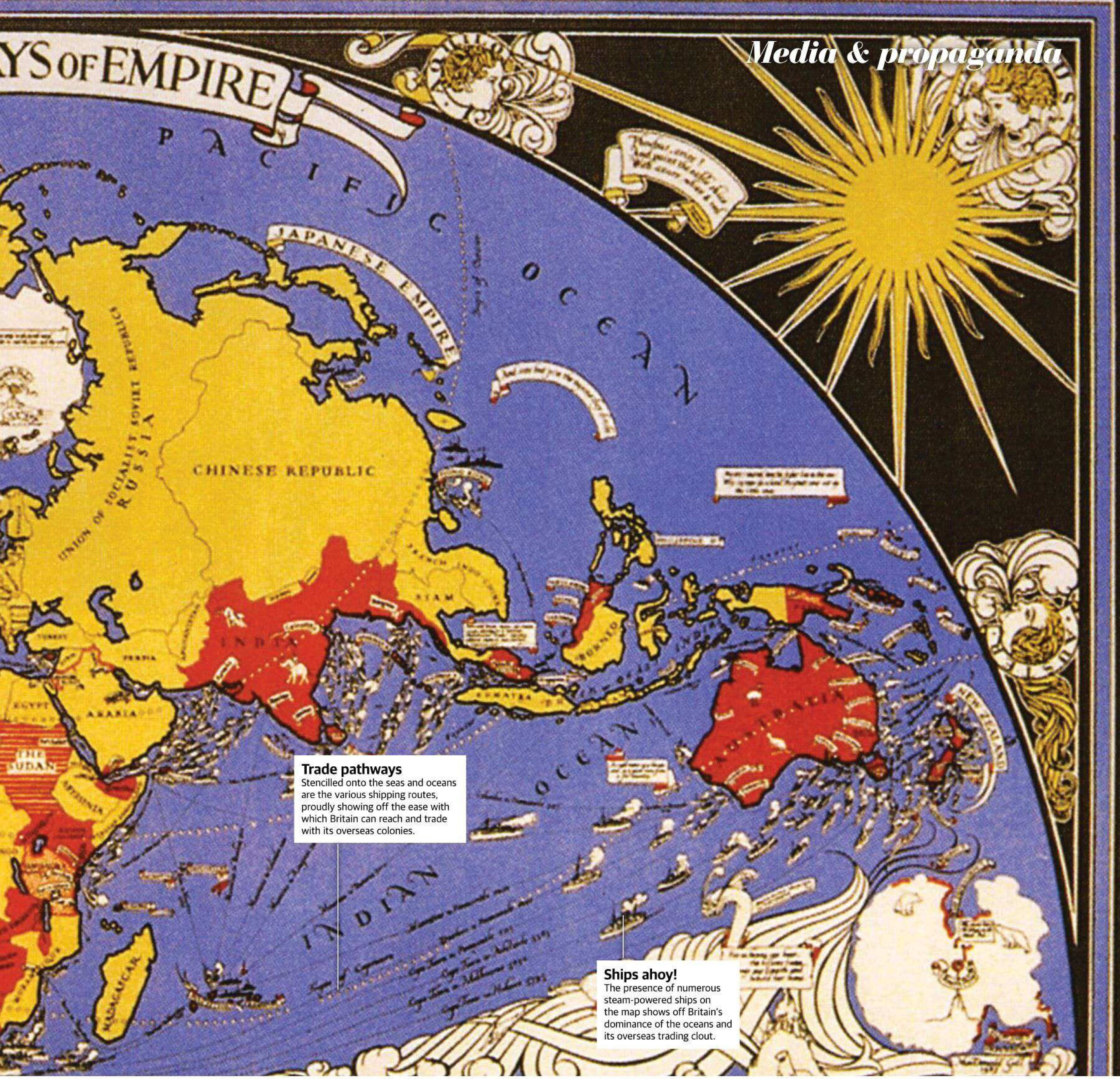
Territory lines
The map in this poster clearly highlights the territories of the British Empire, making it instantly apparent how much of the world's land mass the empire controlled.

This 1931 poster places Britain at the centre of a tight-knit global trade network. The omitted caption at the bottom reads, "Buy empire goods from home and overseas"

Artist Rudolph Swoboda was commissioned by Queen Victoria to paint her Indian subjects for her Golden Jubilee

Media & propaganda

Full of bluster, the empire's propaganda machine told the stories it wanted those at home and abroad to hear about...



Trade pathways
Stencilled onto the seas and oceans are the various shipping routes, proudly showing off the ease with which Britain can reach and trade with its overseas colonies.

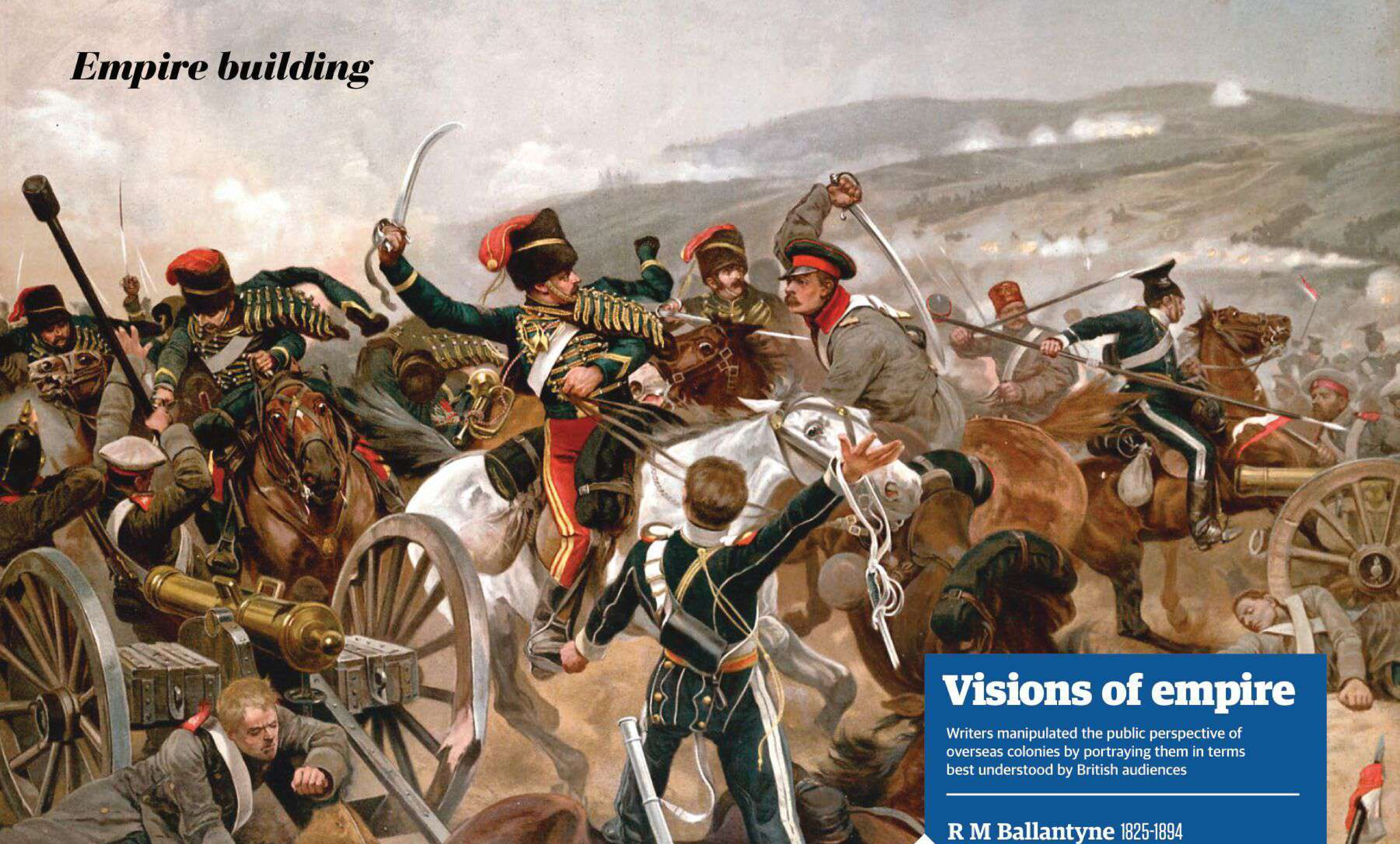
Ships ahoy!
The presence of numerous steam-powered ships on the map shows off Britain's dominance of the oceans and its overseas trading clout.

“I firmly believe that boys were intended to encounter all kinds of risks, in order to prepare them to meet and grapple with risks and dangers incident to man's career with cool, cautious self-possession…” That's novelist R M Ballantyne laying things out, and his words encapsulate so much that characterised the idea of empire: adventure, challenge, soldiering, exploration, a sense of masculinity.

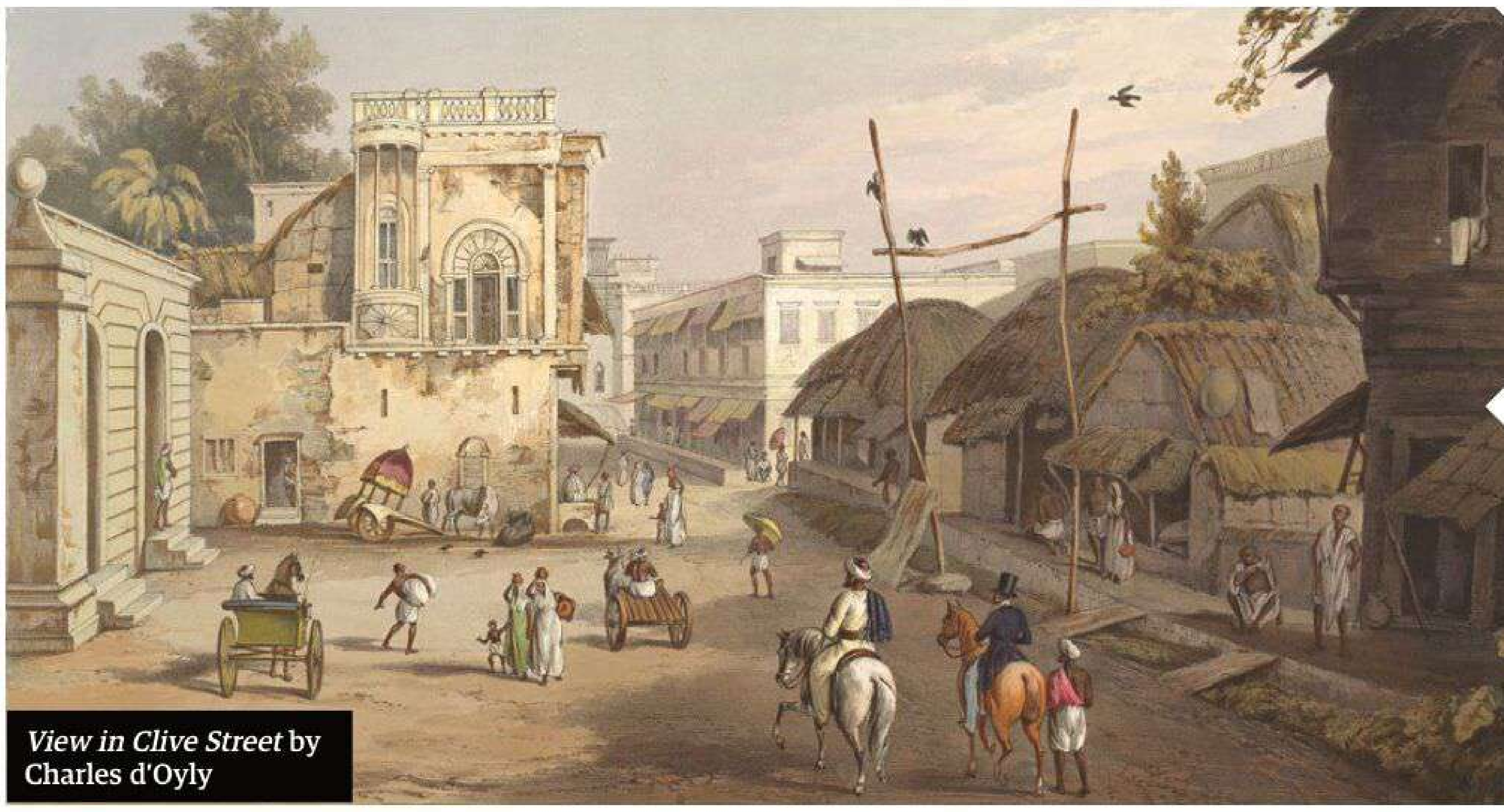
You can imagine the allure this exciting and mysterious unknown must have held for those reading the words. Such imagery was convincing rhetoric; it sold the concept of British imperialism to the public, garnering support as it sought to extend its territory and influence across the globe. Combining cultural, financial and moral force, the British Empire's propaganda machine exerted great imaginative energy to add what we'd now call 'spin' to the realities of what was unfolding overseas.

Empire building was portrayed as a heroic undertaking, taking Britain into unknown territories, both geographical and cultural. And so the narrative centred on aggrandising the exciting possibilities of colonial rule: controlling trade opportunities, embedding the Christian faith in the so-called 'uncivilised' parts of the world, ending slavery and proving Britain's own bravery and superiority by waging war. That's not to mention how colonies were convinced that British intervention was for their own good.

In reality, circumstances were all more nuanced than these simplistic messages suggested. The plain fact was that it was a struggle to establish new colonial administrative and legal systems – not to mention facing the dangers and bloodshed that came with colonisation.

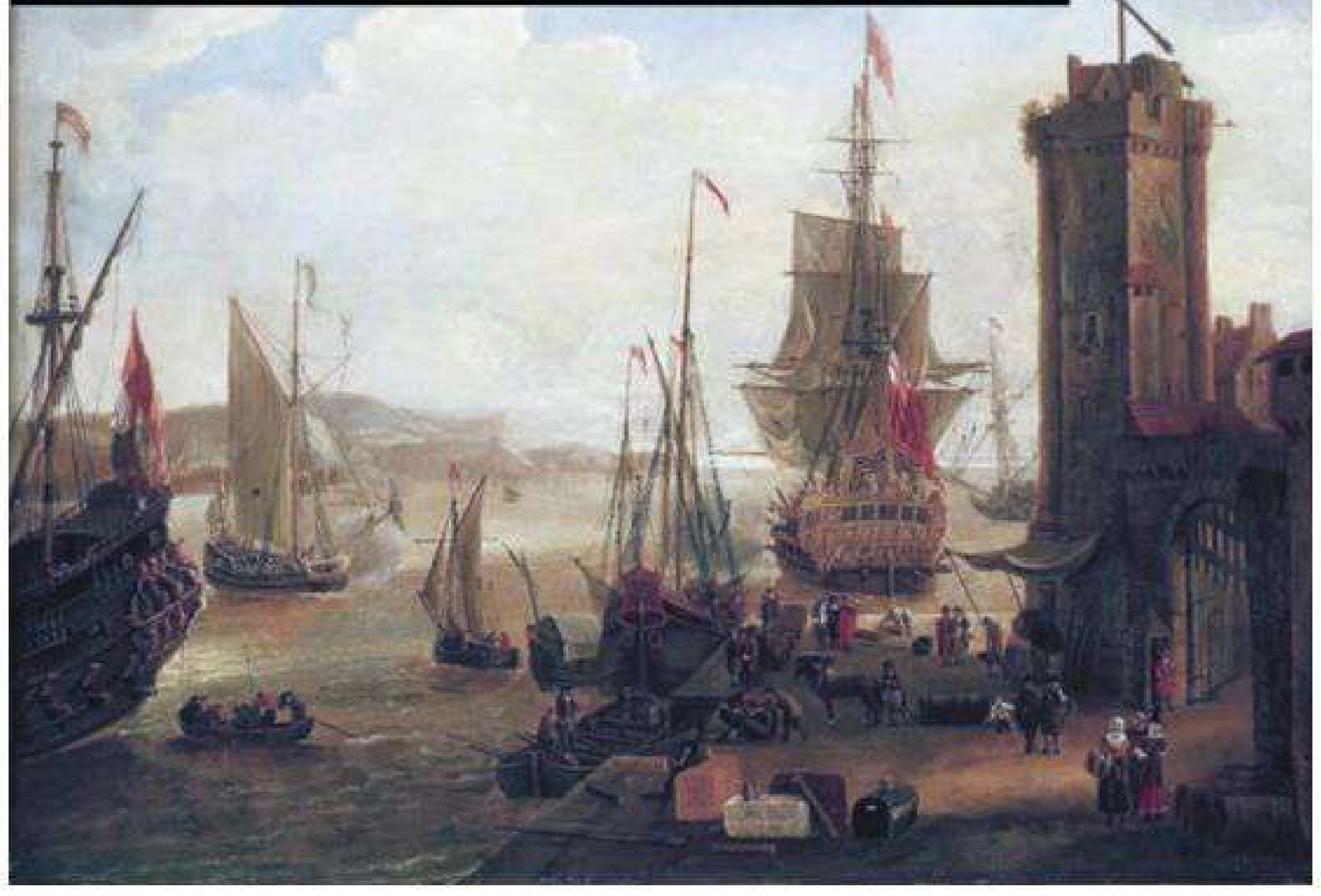


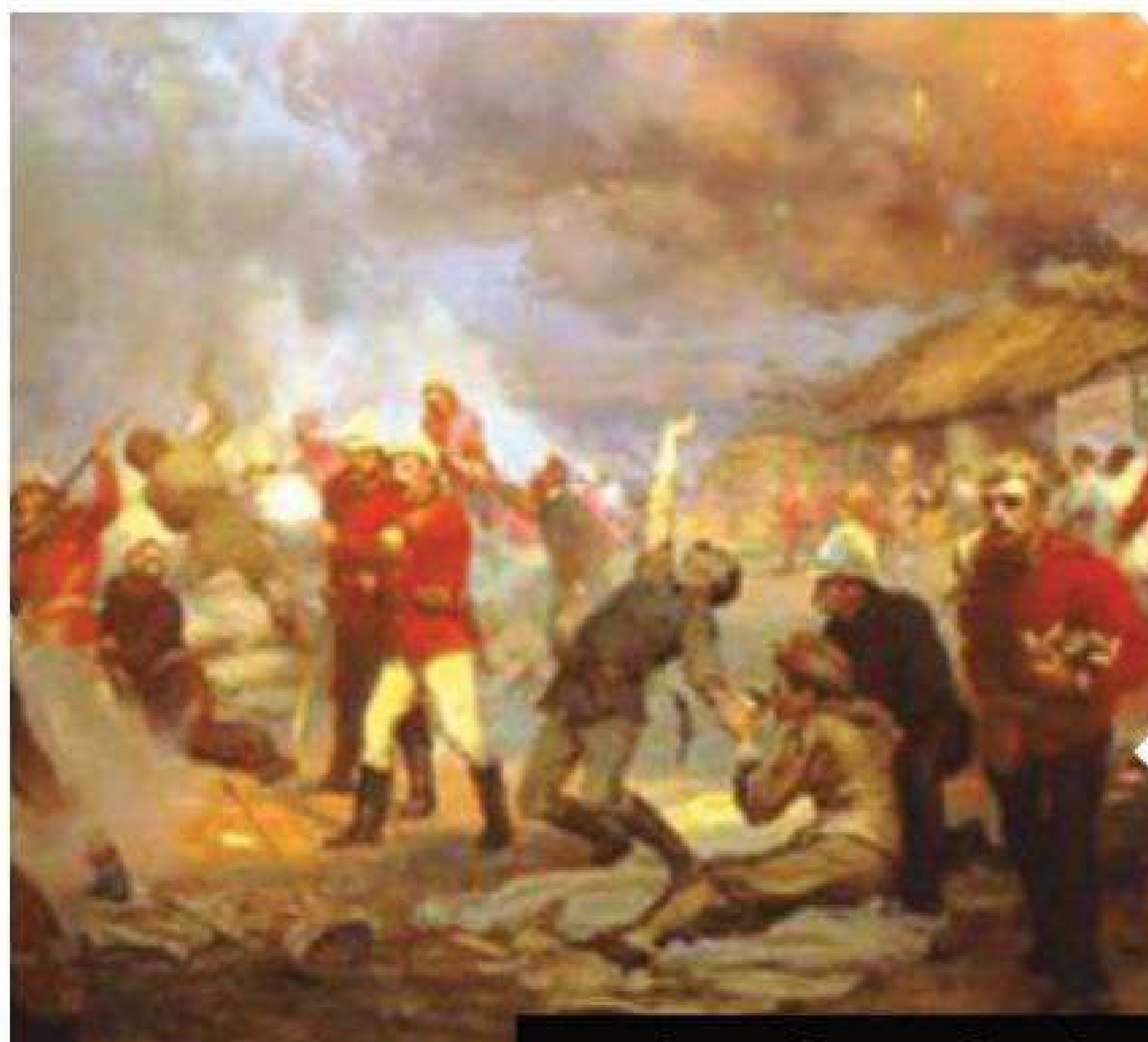
Richard Caton Woodville's 1854 *The Relief of the Light Brigade* depicted the notorious military disaster



View in Clive Street by Charles d'Oyly

Jacob Knyff's 1673 painting shows the hustle and bustle of a British port thanks to global trade



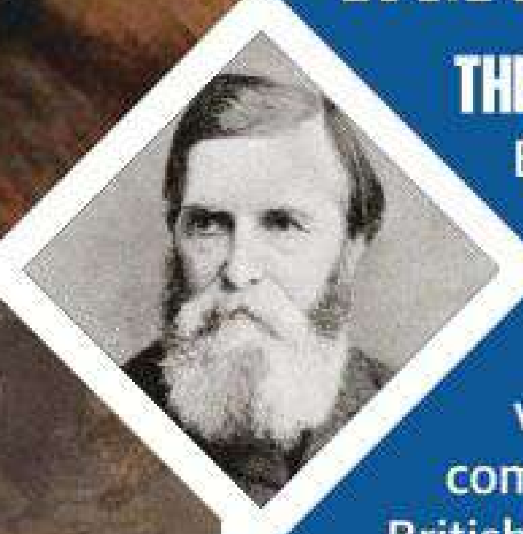


The Defence of Rorke's Drift by artist Elizabeth Southerden Butler

Visions of empire

Writers manipulated the public perspective of overseas colonies by portraying them in terms best understood by British audiences

R M Ballantyne 1825-1894



THE CORAL ISLAND (1858)

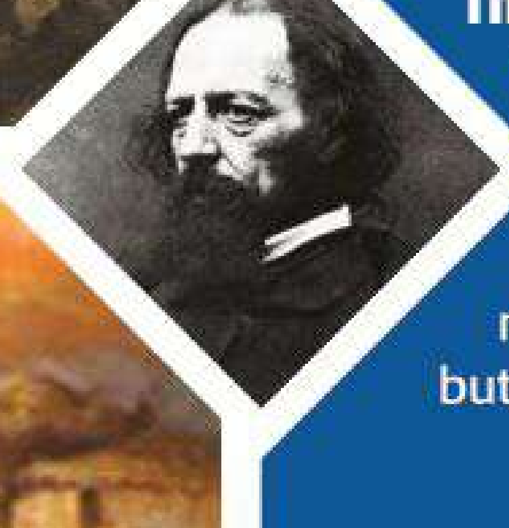
Ballantyne was a Scottish writer whose most famous book was *The Coral Island*. Ballantyne's heroes embodied an ideal of self-reliance and moral integrity that chimed very powerfully with the image that was communicated about the kind of person that the British Empire was built on.

H Rider Haggard 1856-1925

KING SOLOMON'S MINES (1885)

An iconic Africa-set treasure hunt adventure story, featuring the rifle-toting hero Allan Quatermain, *King Solomon's Mines* captured public excitement around the boom in archaeology in the Middle East and Africa. The novel also expresses the typical racial prejudice shown towards Africans at the time.

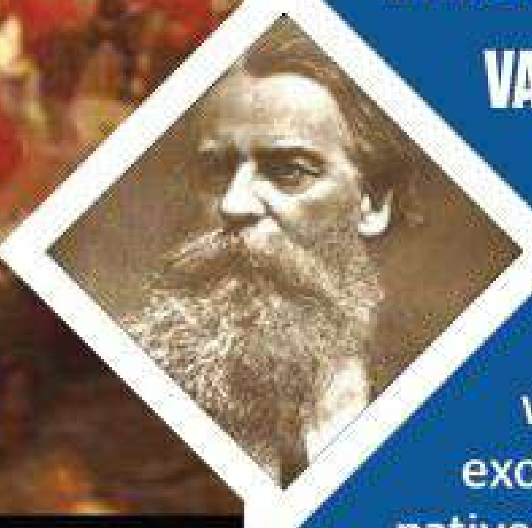
Alfred, Lord Tennyson 1809-1892



THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Tennyson was the Poet Laureate and friend to Queen Victoria. In 1855 *The Charge of the Light Brigade* was published. Its poetic images include the rousing: "Theirs not to make reply,/ Theirs not to reason why,/ Theirs but to do and die."

Thomas Baines 1820-1875



VARIOUS PAINTINGS

Baines accompanied explorers such as Augustus Gregory and David Livingstone on expeditions to Australia and Africa, sketching images of the native people and wildlife. His paintings presented very enticing, exotic landscapes to the British, and depicted the natives as subordinates.

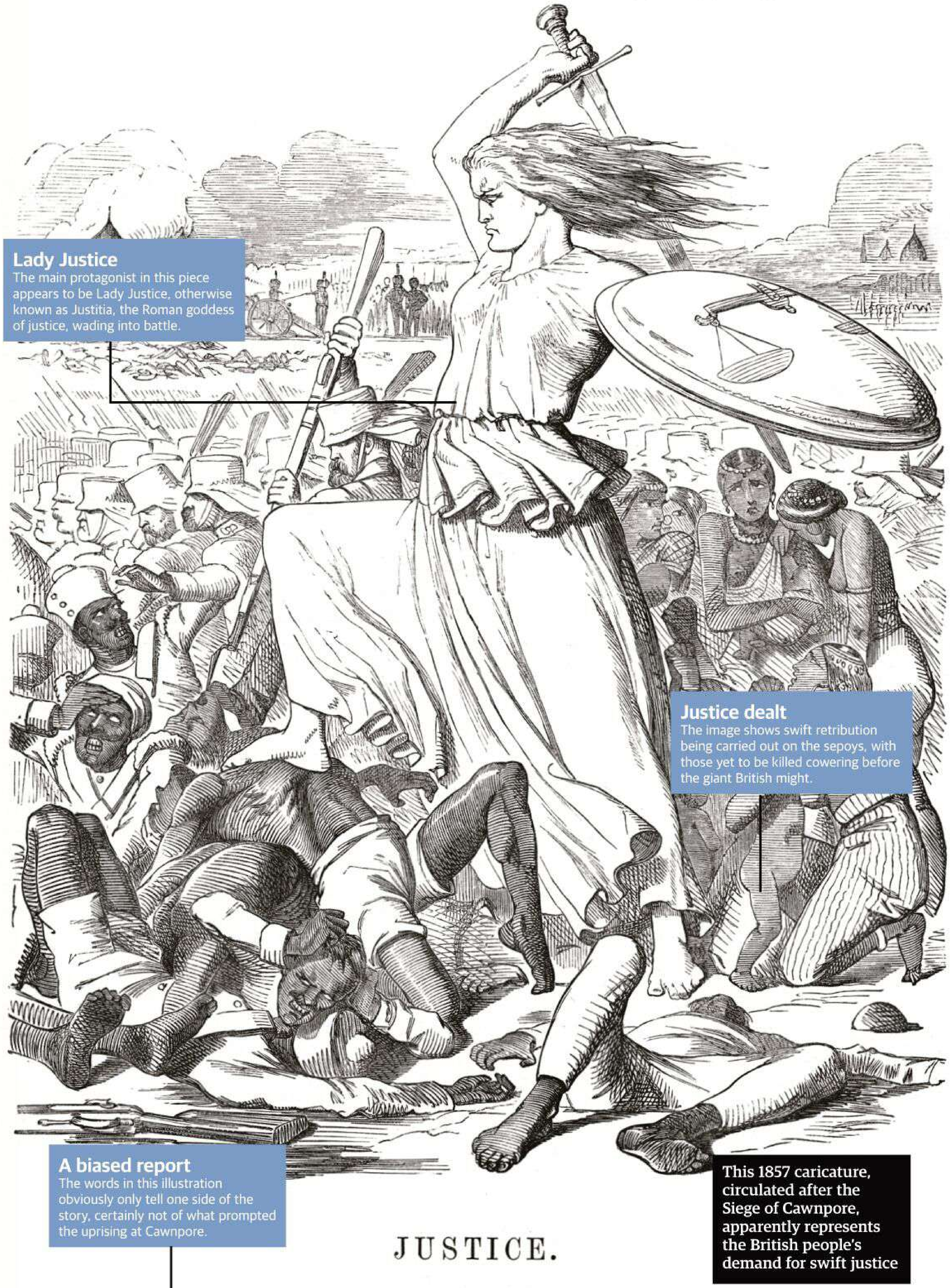
"Half a league onward, / All in the Valley of Death / Rode the six hundred." These are the doom-laden opening words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's iconic poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* – a piece that would once have been very well known to generations of schoolchildren. In our 'post-colonial' era, in which empire is a questionable endeavour, the poem is likely less familiar. Tennyson's verses tell the story of the Battle of Balaclava and work as a powerful example of how the experience of the empire was given a narrative. Tennyson's poem has subtlety to it: acknowledging the heroism of the soldiers and also acknowledging the bloody mess that the event was. The mighty lion that was often used to represent Britain was often more wounded than the popular image perhaps suggested.

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're misinformed." Mark Twain's humorous insight says a great deal about the trust we put in news media and recognises the power it wields in shaping understanding. And he would have known. As an American, he witnessed his country superseding the British superpower by the start of the 20th century.

The British Empire was constructed in people's imaginations as a crucible for heroism; newspapers and art both represented acts in its name as brave, heroic endeavours. Indeed, the empire's military engagements provided inherently dramatic situations, and newspapers relished the opportunity to narrate their twists and turns of fate. Crystallising this were reports about the battle at Rorke's Drift – a timely and powerful source of positive propaganda that countered the negativity regarding recent military losses at Isandlwana.

Notably, Elizabeth Southerden Butler's oil painting *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* (1880) valorises the conflict by depicting British soldiers amid the chaos of battle, their red uniforms bold against the browns and greys of the scene as the hospital roof blazes in the background. For the painting, Butler travelled to Portsmouth, where the regiment dressed in uniform and staged a recreation of the battle. And so, Butler's piece was simply an imaginative retelling of the battle, projecting British soldiers' strength, composure and cool-headedness in the face of death. In reality, it was a hard-won conflict in which the 150 British and colonial troops narrowly succeeded against a reported 3,000-4,000 Zulu warriors.

Other images of colonial life emphasised harmony between people and the beauty of the landscape. These were peaceful societies full of promise, in which British governmental authorities are respected and celebrated, as in Charles d'Oyly's ink and watercolour *View in Clive Street* (1848). Meanwhile R Havell Jr's painting of a Calcutta scene, *A View of Government House from the Eastward* (1819), shows imposing British architecture beside a rudimentary earth road. The exotic and the familiar are juxtaposed to allow audiences to make sense of an alien landscape.



Lady Justice
The main protagonist in this piece appears to be Lady Justice, otherwise known as Justitia, the Roman goddess of justice, wading into battle.

Justice dealt
The image shows swift retribution being carried out on the sepoys, with those yet to be killed cowering before the giant British might.

A biased report
The words in this illustration obviously only tell one side of the story, certainly not of what prompted the uprising at Cawnpore.

This 1857 caricature, circulated after the Siege of Cawnpore, apparently represents the British people's demand for swift justice

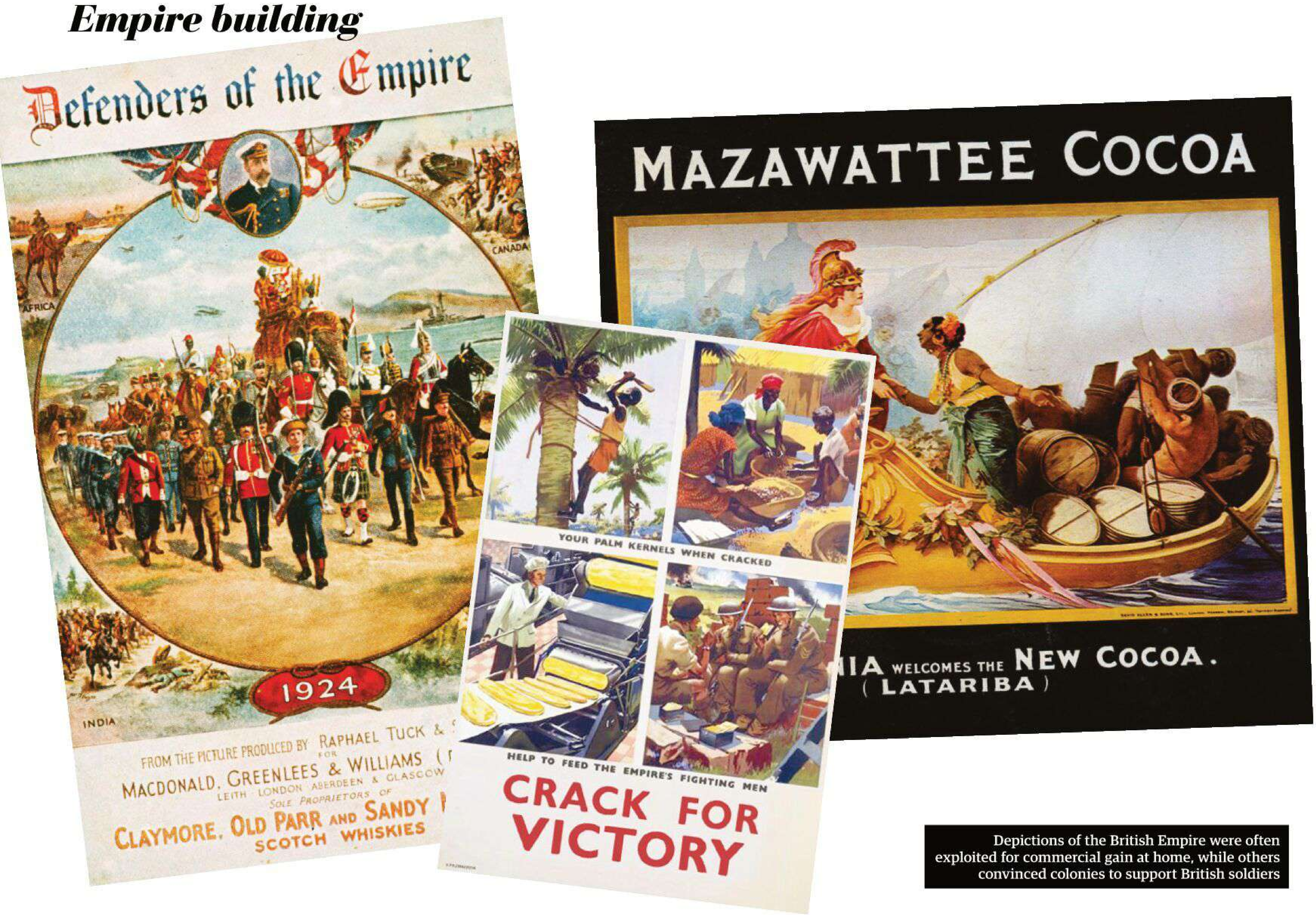
JUSTICE.

, The Sepoys had committed the horrible massacre at Cawnpore, mercilessly destroying women and children. Some of the Peace party were blatant in England, but the people generally demanded Justice.—*September*, 1857.

Groups of Calcutta men and women seemingly gaze in awe at the massive building as if in reverence for British dominance. The untamed Indian wilderness remains very much present; there's certainly a sense of Britain taming the local scene with confidence and elegance. All the while the scene is surveyed by a refined, finely attired Englishman atop a proud horse.

Beyond the tradition-bound world of newspapers and paintings, imperial propaganda made use of food packaging, postcards, music hall performances, cinema, boys' stories, schoolbooks, exhibitions and parades. Any opportunity to communicate messages about imperialism was exploited – the more everyday the better, as opinions were gently influenced through familiarity. There was even a game produced called 'The Game of British Empire'.

Then, in 1900, the food company Bovril produced an advert in print that showed a map


Defenders of the Empire
CANADA
AFRICA
1924
INDIA
FROM THE PICTURE PRODUCED BY RAPHAEL TUCK & S
FOR
MACDONALD, GREENLEES & WILLIAMS (
LEITH LONDON ABERDEEN & GLASGOW
SOLE PROPRIETORS OF
CLAYMORE, OLD PARR AND SANDY
SCOTCH WHISKIES
YOUR PALM KERNELS WHEN CRACKED
HELP TO FEED THE EMPIRE'S FIGHTING MEN
CRACK FOR VICTORY
MAZAWATTEE COCOA
IA WELCOMES THE NEW COCOA.
(LATARIBA)

Depictions of the British Empire were often exploited for commercial gain at home, while others convinced colonies to support British soldiers

of South Africa; marked out route itself spells 'Bovril' in a fusion of capitalism and military effort. Theatre also became an ideal venue for airing ideas about imperialism through entertainment. Anxiety over India – a powerful and at-risk territory that was difficult to govern – was eased through representations of Indian characters as comic caricatures, for example.

On home turf, as support for imperialism weakened, propaganda about the values of the British Empire intensified. By the late 19th century, in an effort to keep the wheels of the empire's machinery turning, schoolchildren became a focus for the government's efforts as they sought to shape young minds for future careers in the colonies. Staunch imperialist G A Henty wrote historical adventure stories – including *On the Irrawaddy, The Dash for Khartoum* and *The Young Colonists* (1897) – which often featured young heroes having an impact in true-to-life scenarios. Youth groups such as The Boys' Brigade, the Scout Association and the Girl Guides sprang up and helped to indoctrinate the next generation. All things military were romanticised, enforcing nationalist pride and force-feeding ideals of heroism and bravery into young minds.

During 1815-1914, the empire included over 450 million people – more than a quarter of the world's population

Imperial propaganda was also channelled to native audiences, imparting ideals that would convince the empire's overseas subjects of the benefit of British control through trade, science and so-called 'civilisation'. Key themes in these messages were health, education and religion.

In Africa, media representations sought to convince local communities that British influence spelled refinements in systems of law and justice, as well as the introduction of health care initiatives. Certain diseases were in fact eradicated and the quality of life in certain colonial communities did improve, adding weight to the imperial justification. This kind of soft power – in contrast to the hard power of military action – is perhaps where the British Empire strutted the best version of itself. Changing perceptions was just as powerful as coercing a people into subservience.

Much to the distaste of modern audiences, adding religion into the mix was the natural next step. Persuaded of the backwardness of local people, it was supposed that the only way to teach

Changing the message

The propaganda that inspired and ultimately drove the British Empire on through the Victorian era came in many forms – including paintings, posters and even the songs sung by popular music hall performers of the day. What's interesting is how the messages that were propagated through the various mediums changed as the empire dominated and then began to crumble.

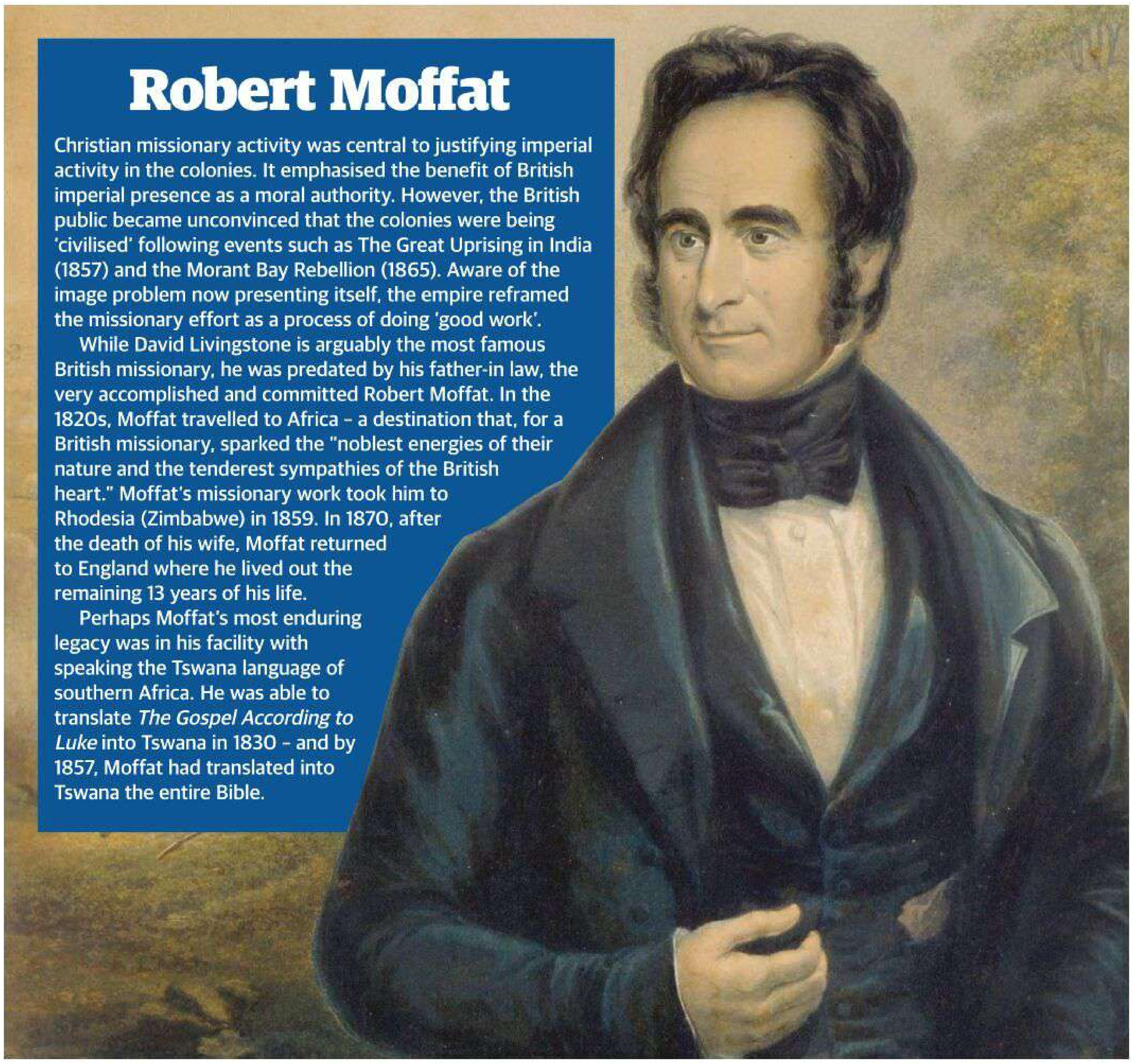
From the 1870s to World War I, exhibitions were staged (of which the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the first) to show off the empire's dominance, and the image of Queen Victoria become ubiquitous in various printed forms. Prime minister Benjamin Disraeli performed the masterstroke of making the queen Empress of India, thus portraying the empire and the monarchy as institutions. The Church also promoted the empire through its missionary societies and encouraged the admiration of prominent Christian heroes of the time. In addition, artwork from the era depicts the colonist 'white man' as being superior and more civilised than the native people.

After World War I, when the empire no longer boasted the proud military and naval supremacy that it once did, the British government sought to encourage imperial solidarity as part of its strategy for recovery. The imagery changed to show colonists and natives as united forces, and imperial products were heavily marketed within the empire. The message was seemingly no longer 'go forth and dominate', but 'remember, we're in this together'.

> "Propaganda was also channelled to native audiences, to convince overseas subjects of the benefit of British control"

refined behaviour was to convert them to faith in Western religious ideals. This was done through the much lauded work of missionaries, who bridged the often fraught cultural divide between British administrators and the indigenous communities. It was a classic case of jingoistic arrogance.

We started by invoking Tennyson's poetry. Now let's now consider a painting: John Everett Millais's image *The North-West Passage* (1874). In the picture we see an old man sitting with his maps; his face registers frustration and perhaps even sadness. The world lies beyond his window and a flag hangs lifelessly against the wall. It's a melancholy scene of faded glory, suggesting that in the end the excitement of imperial ambitions don't last; the man must to return to his gentle pursuits and family life. Perhaps empire-building wasn't quite the heroic adventure it first seemed.

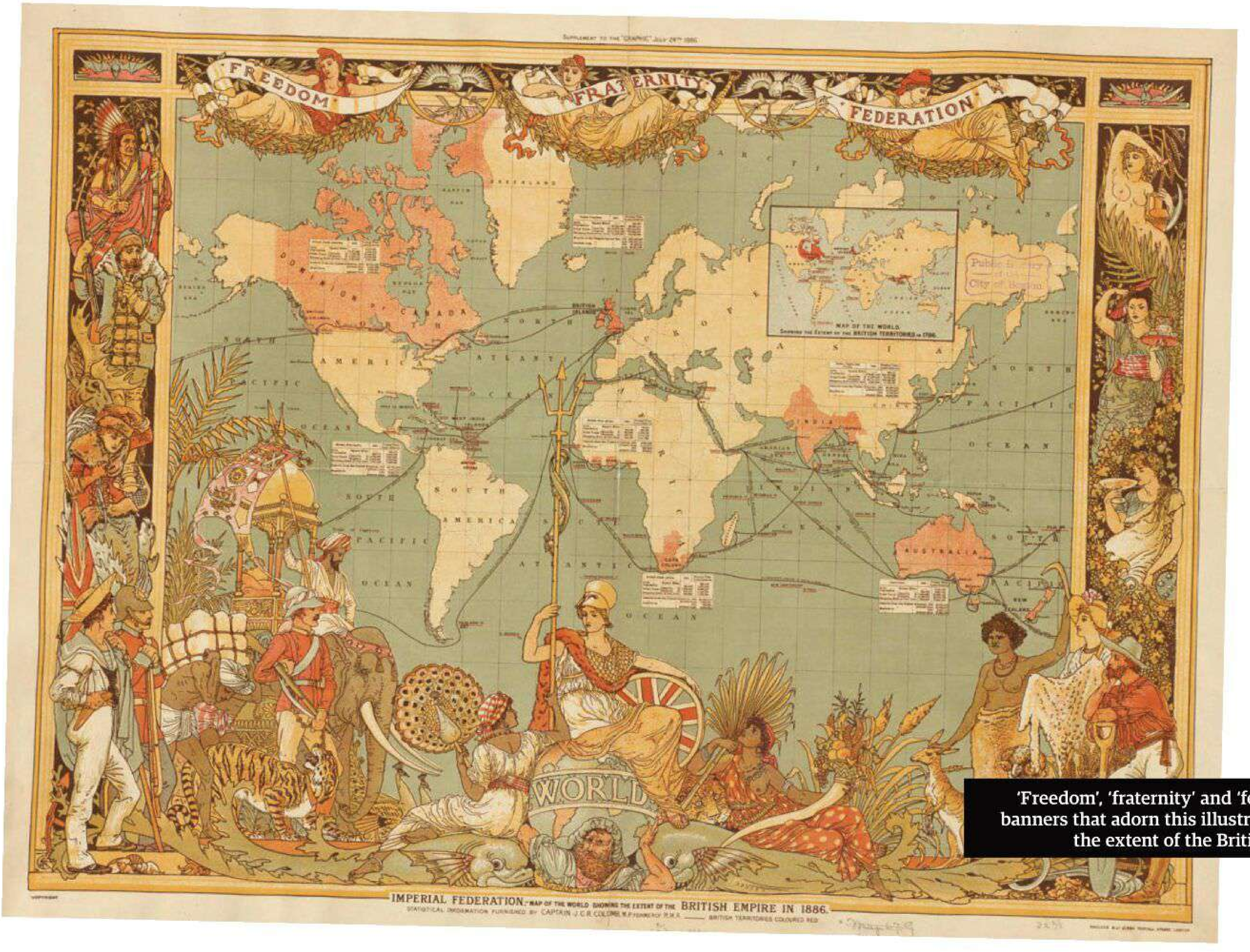


Robert Moffat

Christian missionary activity was central to justifying imperial activity in the colonies. It emphasised the benefit of British imperial presence as a moral authority. However, the British public became unconvinced that the colonies were being 'civilised' following events such as The Great Uprising in India (1857) and the Morant Bay Rebellion (1865). Aware of the image problem now presenting itself, the empire reframed the missionary effort as a process of doing 'good work'.

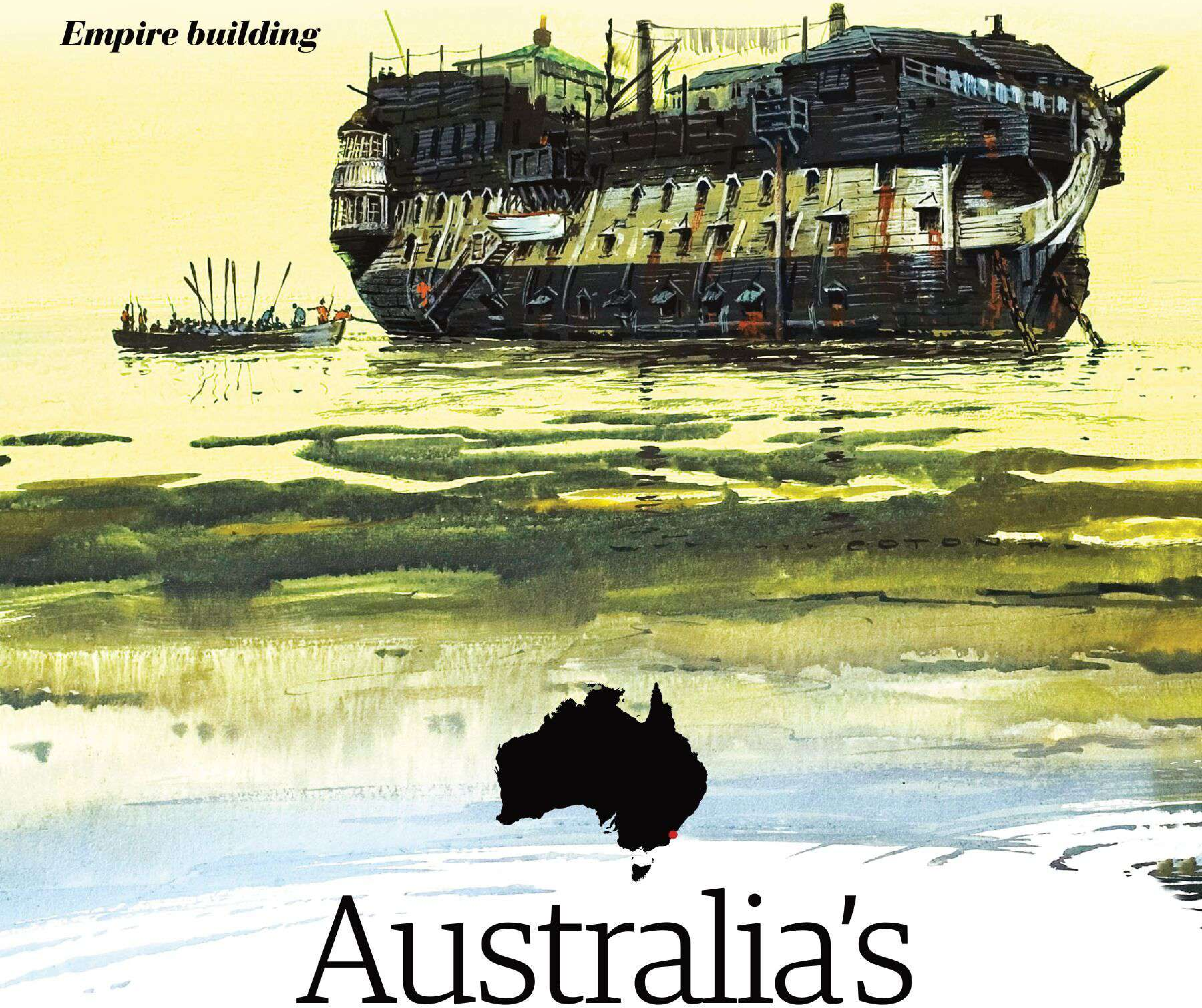
While David Livingstone is arguably the most famous British missionary, he was predated by his father-in law, the very accomplished and committed Robert Moffat. In the 1820s, Moffat travelled to Africa – a destination that, for a British missionary, sparked the "noblest energies of their nature and the tenderest sympathies of the British heart." Moffat's missionary work took him to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1859. In 1870, after the death of his wife, Moffat returned to England where he lived out the remaining 13 years of his life.

Perhaps Moffat's most enduring legacy was in his facility with speaking the Tswana language of southern Africa. He was able to translate *The Gospel According to Luke* into Tswana in 1830 – and by 1857, Moffat had translated into Tswana the entire Bible.


Supplement to the "Graphic" July 24th 1886
FREEDOM
FRATERNITY
FEDERATION
WORLD
IMPERIAL FEDERATION. MAP OF THE WORLD SHOWING THE EXTENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN 1886.

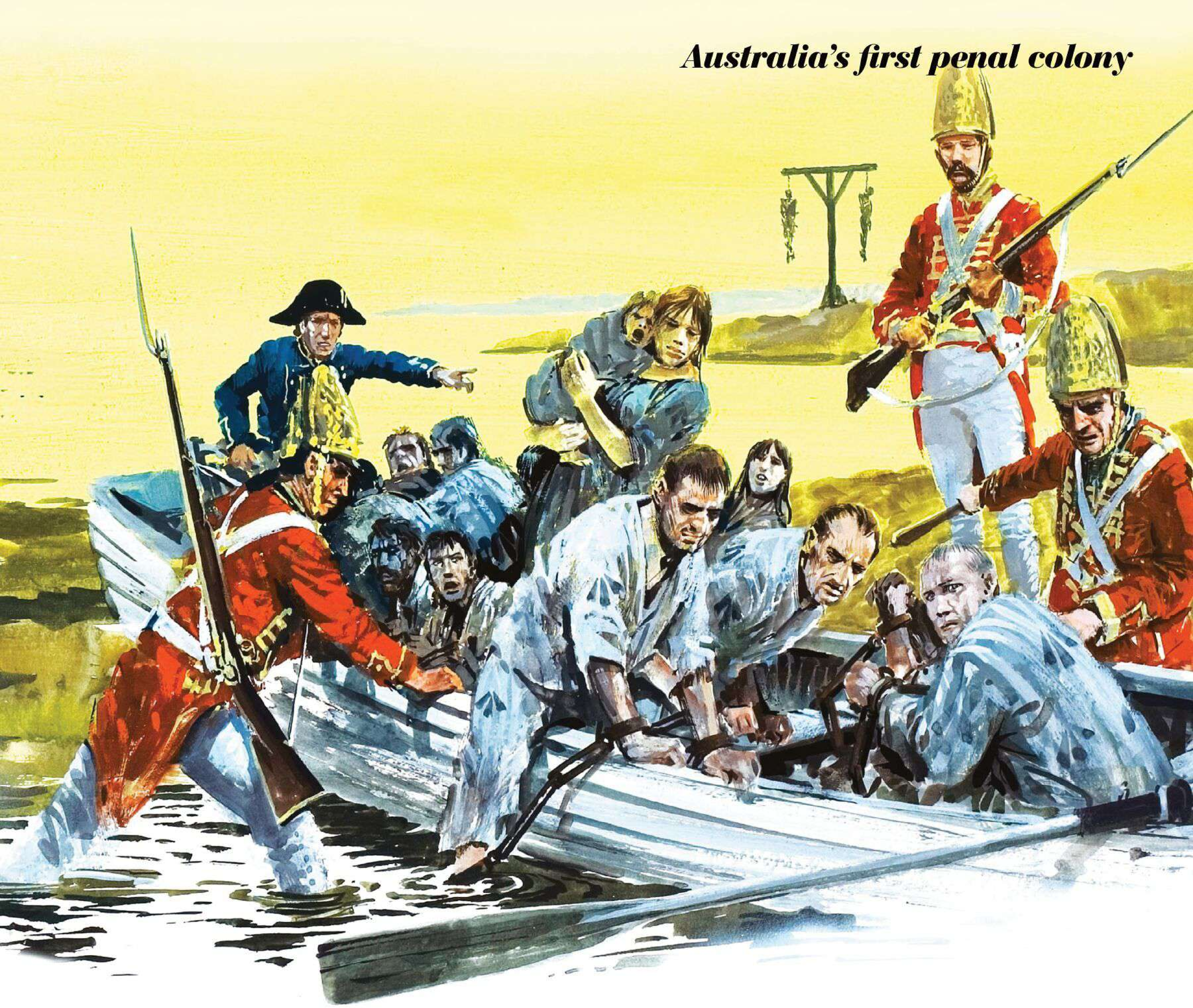
'Freedom', 'fraternity' and 'federation' read the banners that adorn this illustrated map showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886

© Alamy



Australia's first penal colony

Take a closer look at how punitive criminal sentences, a gruelling journey and years of backbreaking labour forged the modern-day land down under



With a burgeoning population, a soaring crime rate and a rudimentary police force still over a century away, crime rates started to spiral out of control in 18th-century Britain. Meanwhile, death sentences became an everyday tool in a judge's arsenal, used as a draconian way of reducing the number of criminals on the street as much as a deterrent. Even so, a state-sanctioned blood bath of hangings for the dozens of crimes that a criminal could receive capital punishment for was something the British government wanted to avoid as much as possible. So, in 1718 and with the New World of America firmly in sight, the Transportation Act was put into effect.

Transportation was a legal way of sending convicted criminals abroad to labour in the new colonies. The act allowed for two categories of punishment for two different types of offence: for those that would normally receive 'Benefit of Clergy', the judge could hand out seven years of overseas labour instead of a branding or a whipping. Capital crimes could be repealed at the discretion of the judge and, if he was in a merciful mood, a death sentence could be reduced to a minimum 14-year transportation sentence. It solved the pressing issues of cheap labour in the New World, removed criminals from the streets and emptied jails; for the British government it seemed like the perfect solution. Thus Britain forged its new colonies on the blood and sweat of convicts. This was such a popular form of punishment that 50,000 people were transported to America from 1718 to 1786, and when the American Revolution broke out, making transportation to New England impossible, Britain didn't consider changing its policy but simply looked to a vast wilderness brimming with opportunity on the far side of the world: Australia.

> "Britain [...] simply looked to a vast wilderness brimming with opportunity on the far side of the world: Australia"

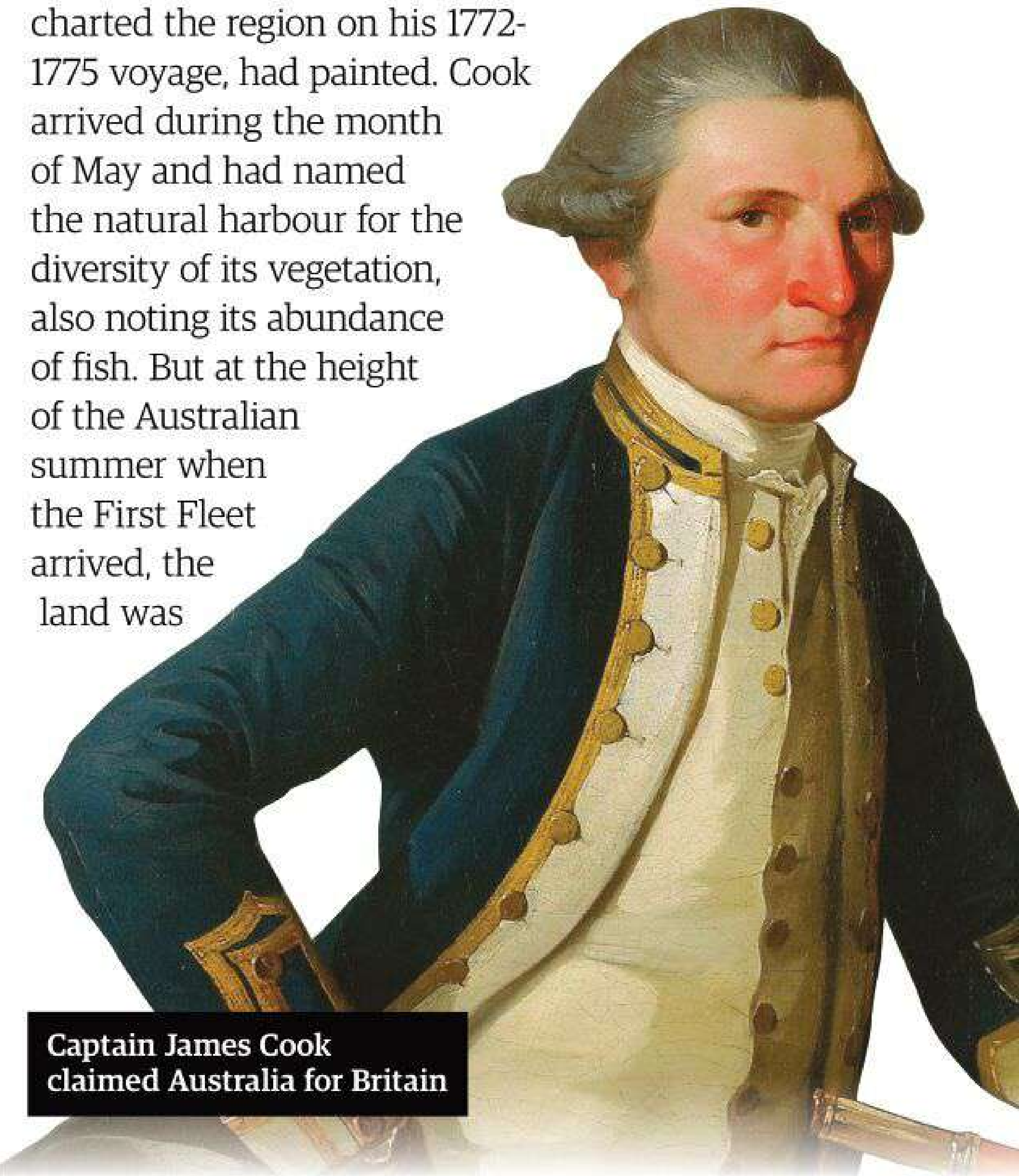
The 'First Fleet', as it's now known, set sail for Australia on 13 May 1787 and consisted of 11 ships: two armed Royal Navy vessels, three supply ships and six criminal transports housing 736 convicts in total. The fleet's admiral was Arthur Phillip, a working-class military man who had ascended through the merchant navy from apprentice at 13, before giving up his civilian rank to join the Royal Navy as a seaman two years later. He was a self-taught navigator and excelled in other maritime disciplines, which gave him a distinct edge over his peers and allowed him to take charge of his own fleet as admiral aged 50. He was also a disciplined, far-sighted and pragmatic leader who believed slavery would only hinder the progress of the new colonies, yet wasn't afraid to use the hangman's noose to make an example of those convicts who broke the rules repeatedly.

Only a few of those aboard had been given transportation sentences for violent crimes that would otherwise have necessitated a death penalty. Among those guilty of lesser crimes were 70-year-old Elizabeth Beckford, given seven years for stealing a wheel of cheese, 11-year-old James Grace, transported for stealing ribbon, and nine-year-old John Hudson, a chimney sweep also given a disproportionately harsh sentence for common larceny. Admiral Phillip had hoped for tradesmen to set up the new colony but not only was he dismayed by the largely unskilled rabble he was presented with, he was appalled at the treatment the courts had meted out to the prisoners while their fate was decided.

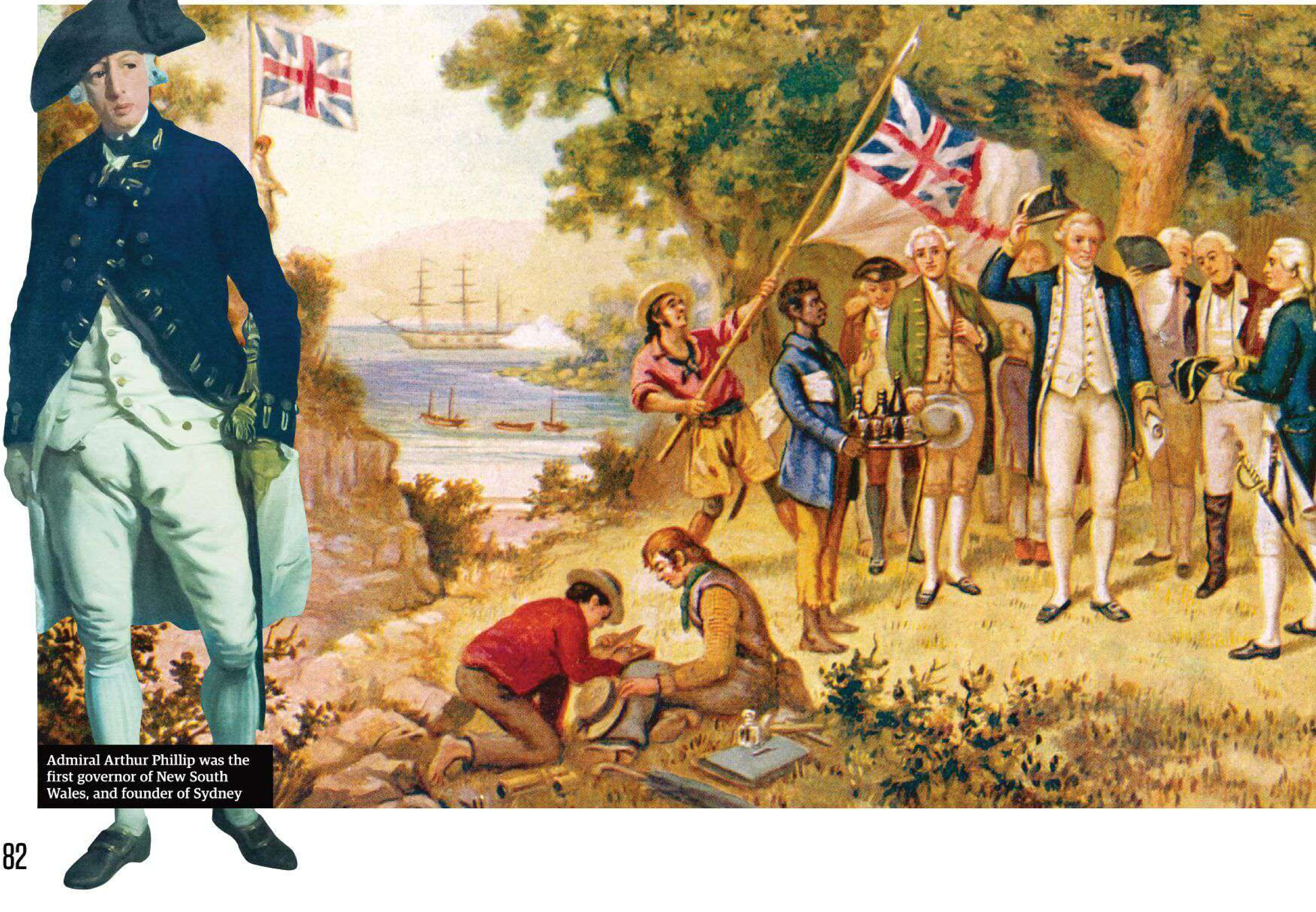
About 20 per cent of modern-day Australians are thought to be descendents of transported convicts

Although the cramped conditions that awaited them below deck could hardly be considered comfortable, Philip had hoped that each convict was at least being given the best chance of surviving the journey that their 'pardon' afforded them: the sorry state that they were marched from the jail in suggested otherwise. Regardless of crime, age, ethnicity or gender, nearly all were malnourished, lice-infested and wearing barely enough in the way of moth-eaten rags to hide their modesty. It enraged Philip that not only was the government denying him the skilled labour he would need to effectively establish a colony, but the rag-tag dregs of Britain's gaols had been half-broken before they had even left the shore. Nevertheless, he was neither going to be delayed nor disheartened, and so Philip saw the First Fleet through what would have been a distinctly unpleasant eight-month journey to a harbour 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) south of modern-day Sydney, stopping off at South America and South Africa along the way.

The last of the fleet landed at its final destination in Botany Bay relatively intact on 20 January 1788. None of the ships had been lost on the journey and only 48 of the would-be colonists had died, a remarkably low statistic for the time. However, the new colony was nowhere near the paradise that explorer Captain James Cook, who charted the region on his 1772-1775 voyage, had painted. Cook arrived during the month of May and had named the natural harbour for the diversity of its vegetation, also noting its abundance of fish. But at the height of the Australian summer when the First Fleet arrived, the land was



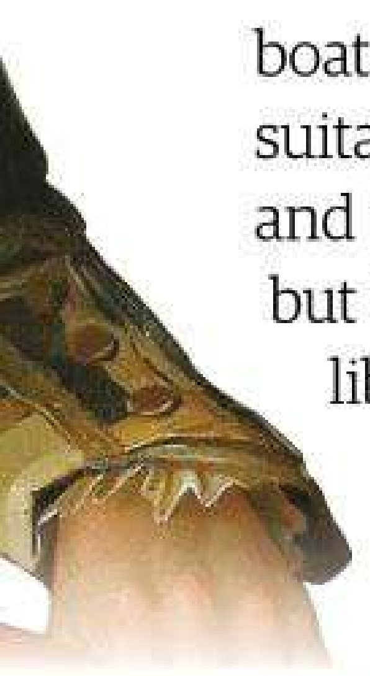
Captain James Cook claimed Australia for Britain



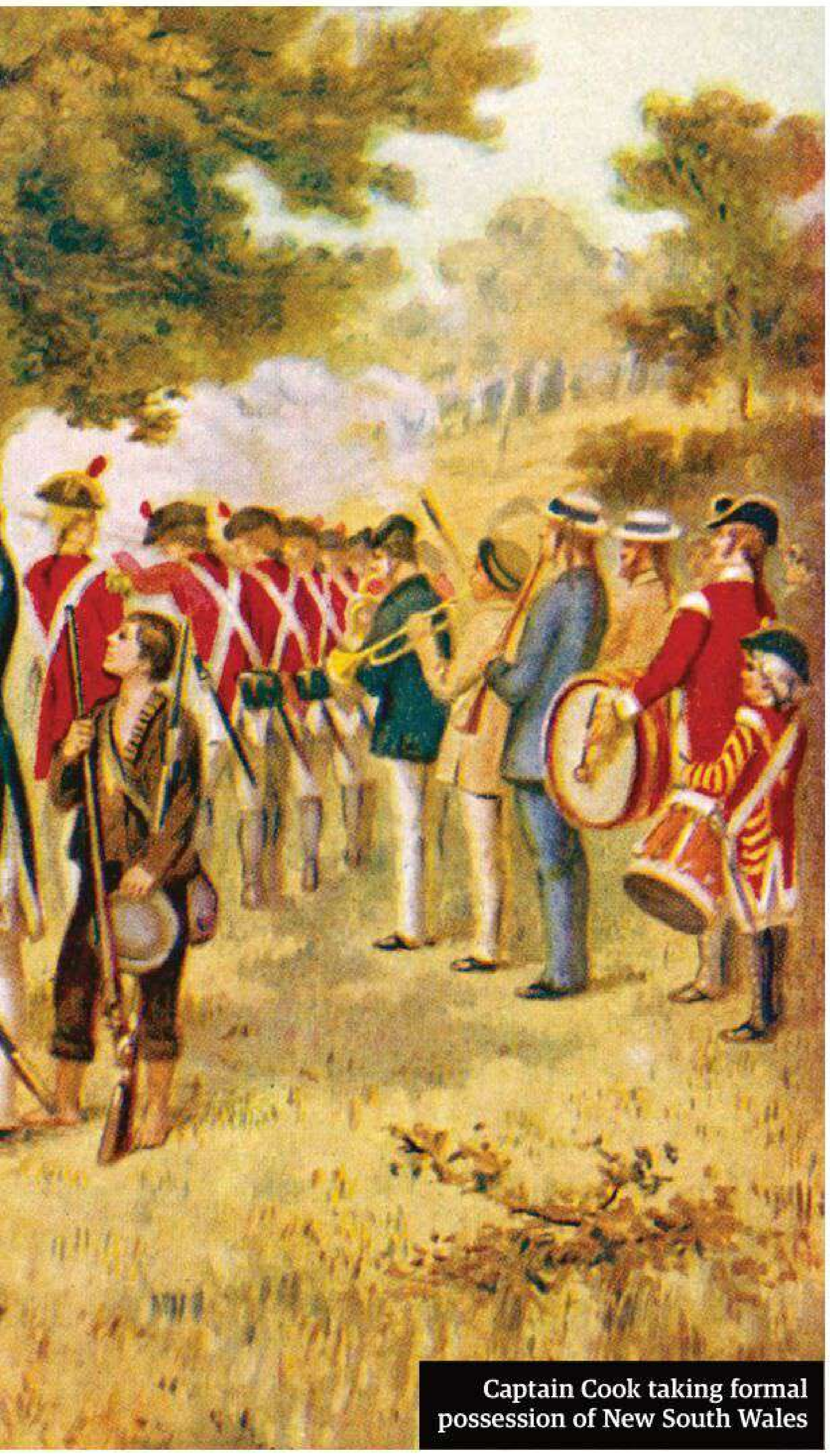
Admiral Arthur Phillip was the first governor of New South Wales, and founder of Sydney

> "Regardless of crime, age, ethnicity or gender, nearly all were malnourished, lice-infested and wearing rags"

withered and the stingrays Cook had talked about were nowhere to be seen. The shallow bay also prevented the ships from dropping anchor close to the shoreline, so conditions for a fledgling colony on shore were far from ideal. The water was mostly brackish, the bay's topography would make it difficult to defend and the soil was poor with slim potential for growing crops from the grain they had brought with them. At least there were plenty of strong trees and the natives, an Aboriginal clan called Cadigal, weren't hostile. But the fear of attack from Aboriginals or foreign powers looking to usurp his claim to the land led Arthur Phillip to search elsewhere. He took a small party of three boats north the next day to discover a much more suitable, sheltered site for a colony with fertile soil and fresh water. Cook had called it Port Jackson but hadn't entered the harbour, so Phillip took the liberty of renaming it Sydney.



It wasn't just the dregs of the prisons that had been upended into the First Fleet. One particular thorn in Phillip's side was the prickly Major Robert Ross. The Scottish marine had a reputation for having a hair-trigger temper, but it wasn't until Phillip was trying to set up the colony that he discovered just how insubordinate he could be. He refused to allow marines under his command to supervise convicts or to sit in court on convict trials, he was lazy, quarrelled with his officers and commanders alike and generally made Phillip's job of governing the colony more difficult. Phillip had already instructed his lieutenant, David Collins, to take a small party of seven free men and 15 convicts to Norfolk Island, a small island 1,412 kilometres (877 miles) directly east of Australia. They arrived a month after the settlement of Sydney and over the course of a year, more convicts were sent to help with what appeared to be a promising industry.



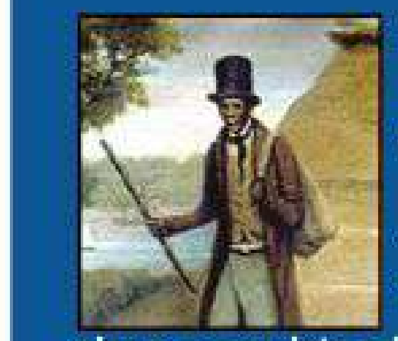
Captain Cook taking formal possession of New South Wales

Perhaps to avoid outright conflict as much as the need for a military presence on the island, Phillip decided to send the surly major over to Norfolk with a retinue of marines in 1790. It was not a successful relocation. Ross continued to argue with Lieutenant Governor Collins and his own men. He declared martial law for four months after the 540-ton HMS Sirius attempting to bring over a company of marines escorting convicts was wrecked on a coral reef. No lives were lost but the ship and all its provisions perished, which only piled the pressure on the islanders. In the space of a few years, Norfolk had turned from a small cottage industry settlement to an intensive labour camp worked by the worst of the Australian mainland's criminals and overseen by military officers who proved difficult to manage. Ross was sent back to Sydney in 1791 and was promptly deported back to Britain after being relieved of his command. Even after Ross left though, Norfolk Island was still used primarily as a prison island for the worst of the worst from the Australian mainland. The treatment of its convicts under the command of Governor Darling became even more brutal.

The system that Arthur Phillip set up aimed to extract the best use of every convict. A few cursory details like their place of birth, religion and physical marks like scars or tattoos were noted to identify them, before they were asked about their previous trade and level of literacy to establish their vocation. Extra labourers, providing they worked well, were always handy but anyone with a trade was valuable. As the penal colonies of Botany Bay and Sydney spread into Australia's rural regions, the trades of a Western civilisation became sought after. Now, not just carpenters, smiths and farmers were in demand, but housemaids, nannies, porters and other servants were required for the free migrants seeking their fortune in a new country. Regardless of their background, every convict

Who were the first 'Poivis'?

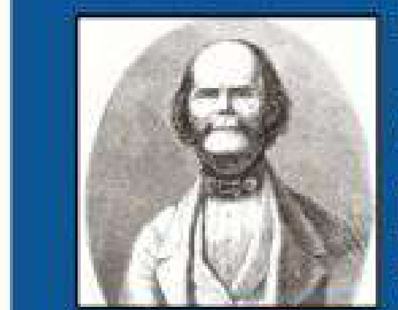
Notable convicts who endured sentences on the other side of the globe



The Ferryman

Crime: Stealing sugar

Jamaican-born Billy Blue was sentenced to seven years' transportation in 1796 that saw him leave for Botany Bay in 1800. He finished his sentence and became a ferryman across Sydney Harbour, married in 1805 and had six children.



The 'Wild White Man'

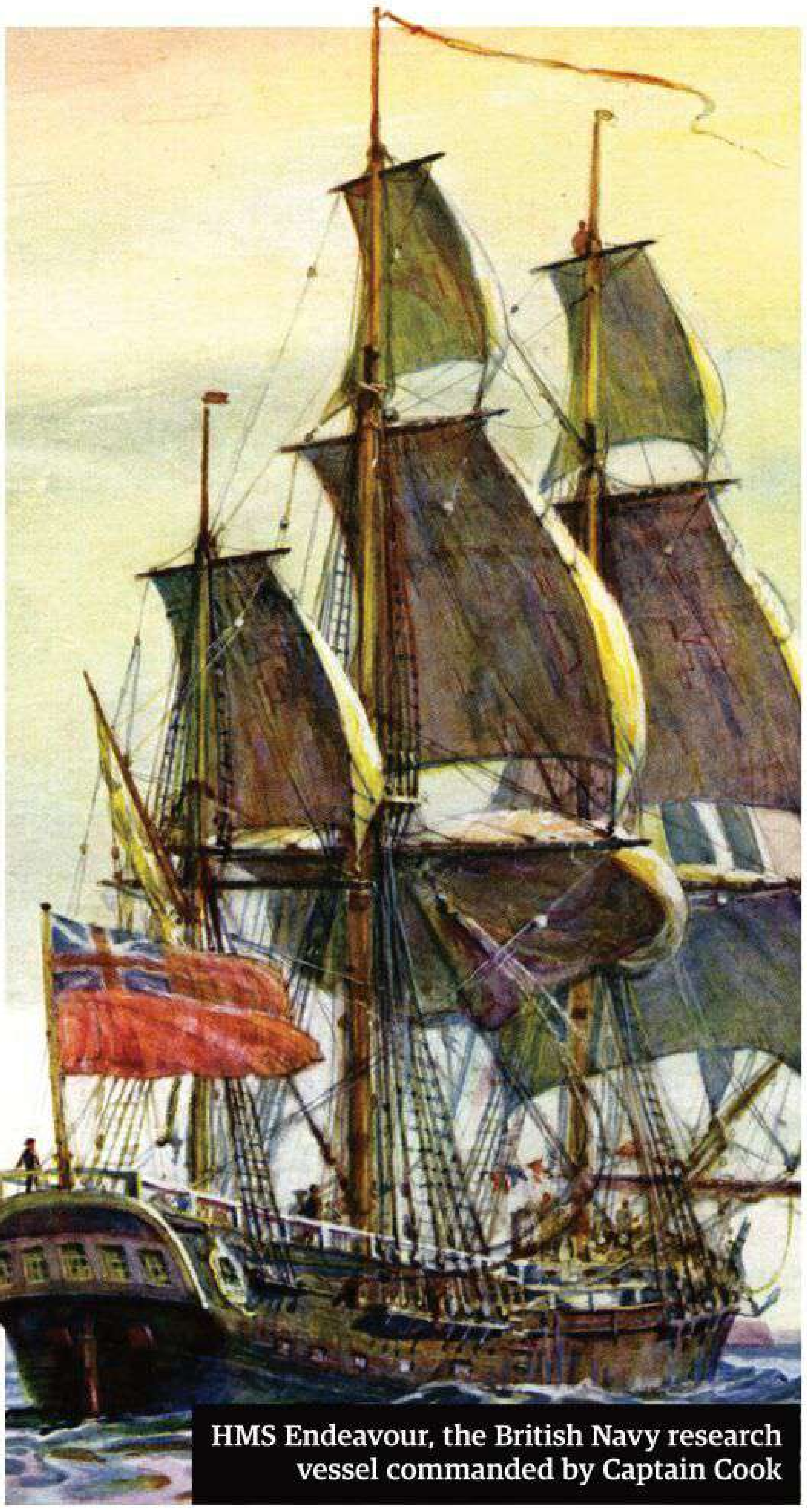
Crime: Receiving stolen goods

Former soldier William Buckley managed to escape incarceration when he arrived in Australia. Buckley was 'adopted' by a friendly tribe of Aboriginals, the Wathaurung, who believed he was the returned spirit of a recently deceased tribesman, and became a respected member of their community.

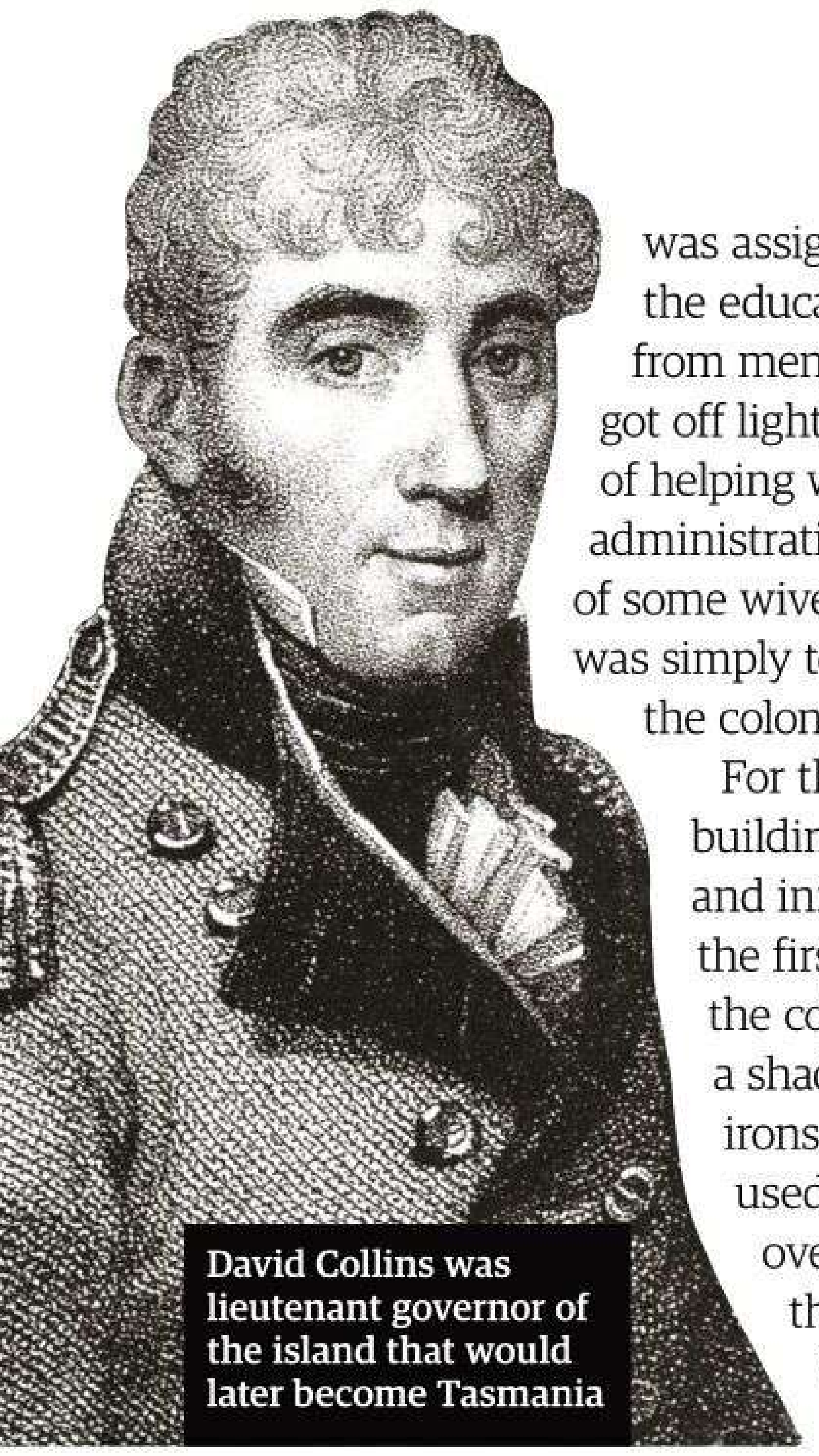
Mother Australia

Crime: Stealing a frock

Mary Ann Wade was the youngest convict sent aboard the second fleet at 11 years old, after her death sentence was commuted to transportation. On arrival she was taken to Norfolk Island where she later had two children. Her descendants today number in the tens of thousands.



HMS Endeavour, the British Navy research vessel commanded by Captain Cook



David Collins was lieutenant governor of the island that would later become Tasmania

was assigned a trade: the educated were freed from menial labour and got off lightly with the job of helping with the island's administration, while the job of some wives and mothers was simply to help populate the colonies.

For those tasked with building the houses and infrastructure in the first few decades of the colonies, life was a shade tougher. Leg irons were widely used and the convicts' overseers wielded their whips liberally. The back-breaking work building roads and bridges could last anything from 14 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Although the aim – ostensibly at least – was to reform these convicts into new colonists by the end of their sentence and there was even a chance for them to earn their freedom for good behaviour, there was no doubt they were being punished for their crimes.

Those transported for more serious crimes could face the death penalty if they were caught escaping, or at the very least face even harder time as colonists on Norfolk Island. Neither did those servants who were assigned to the households of the free migrants have an easy time of it. They were at the mercy of their masters and vulnerable to abuse.

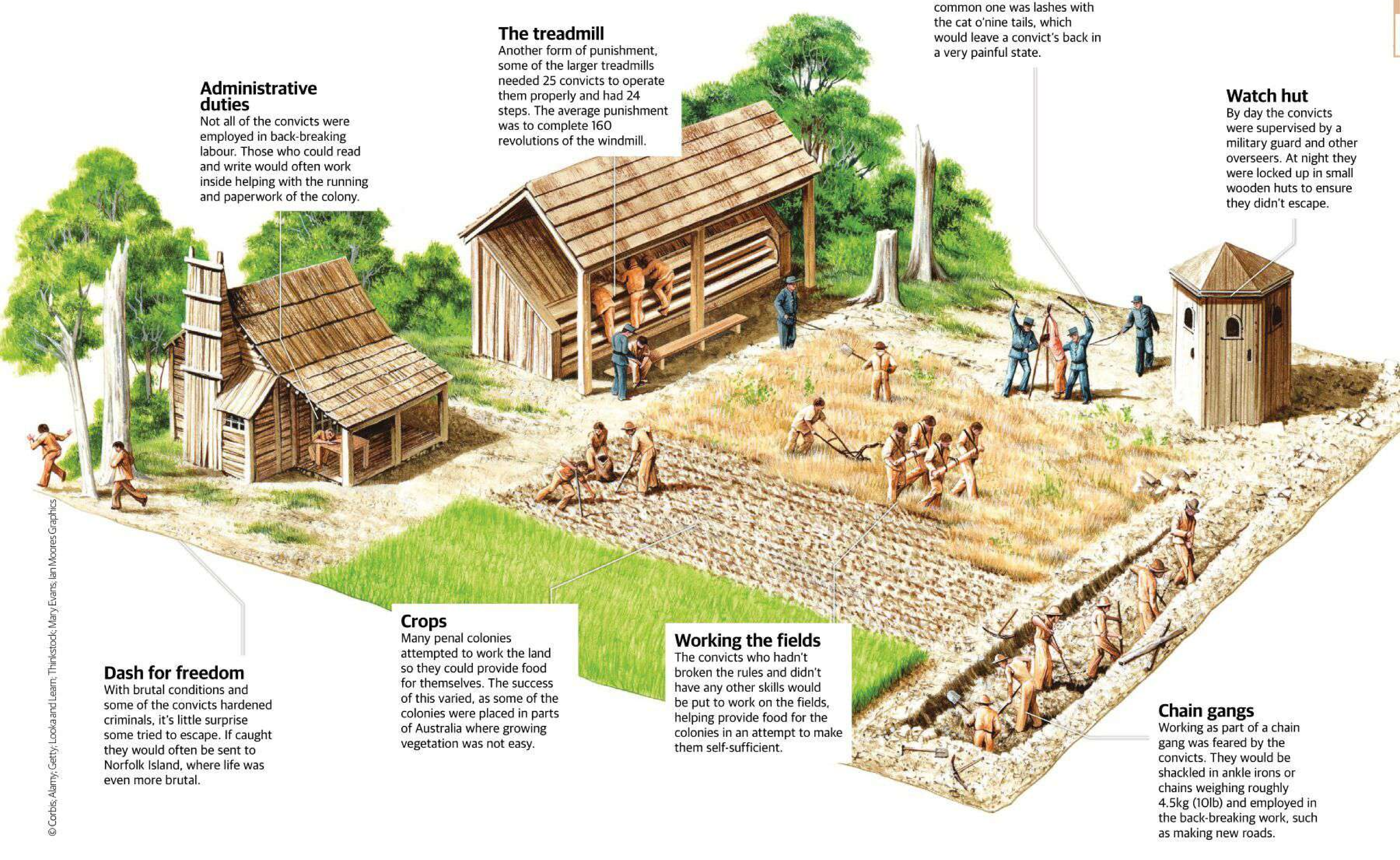
> "Back-breaking work building roads and bridges could last anything from 14 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week"

Convicts weren't completely without rights, though. The colonial government paid for their food and clothes, so if a convict's master wasn't feeding or clothing them properly, was giving them disproportionate physical punishment or not allowing them enough rest, the convict could have their complaint heard. If the defendant was found guilty, the convict could be reassigned to someone else and their former master or mistress could lose their right to have convicts work for them at all in the future.

The female transportees of Botany Bay and Port Jackson were treated separately from the men – the 120-strong convict roster on one of the six prison ships of the First Fleet was entirely female, for a

A day in a convict's life

Life for the first POMs was hard and the punishments dished out could be brutal



A good flogging
Those convicts who didn't behave were subjected to different punishments. A common one was lashes with the cat o'nine tails, which would leave a convict's back in a very painful state.

The treadmill
Another form of punishment, some of the larger treadmills needed 25 convicts to operate them properly and had 24 steps. The average punishment was to complete 160 revolutions of the windmill.

Administrative duties
Not all of the convicts were employed in back-breaking labour. Those who could read and write would often work inside helping with the running and paperwork of the colony.

Watch hut
By day the convicts were supervised by a military guard and other overseers. At night they were locked up in small wooden huts to ensure they didn't escape.

Dash for freedom
With brutal conditions and some of the convicts hardened criminals, it's little surprise some tried to escape. If caught they would often be sent to Norfolk Island, where life was even more brutal.

Crops
Many penal colonies attempted to work the land so they could provide food for themselves. The success of this varied, as some of the colonies were placed in parts of Australia where growing vegetation was not easy.

Working the fields
The convicts who hadn't broken the rules and didn't have any other skills would be put to work on the fields, helping provide food for the colonies in an attempt to make them self-sufficient.

Chain gangs
Working as part of a chain gang was feared by the convicts. They would be shackled in ankle irons or chains weighing roughly 4.5kg (10lb) and employed in the back-breaking work, such as making new roads.

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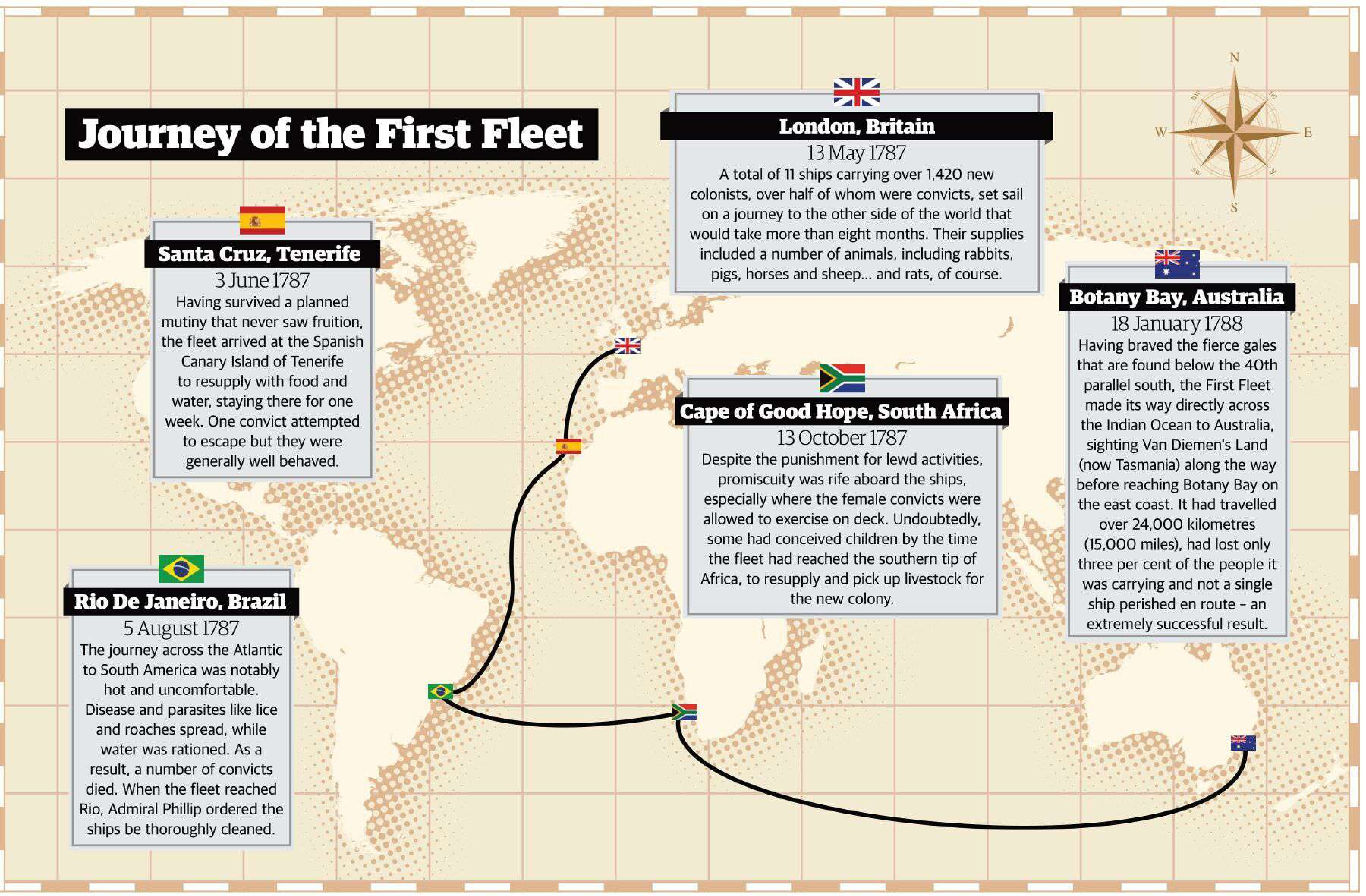
Journey of the First Fleet



London, Britain

13 May 1787

A total of 11 ships carrying over 1,420 new colonists, over half of whom were convicts, set sail on a journey to the other side of the world that would take more than eight months. Their supplies included a number of animals, including rabbits, pigs, horses and sheep… and rats, of course.

Santa Cruz, Tenerife

3 June 1787

Having survived a planned mutiny that never saw fruition, the fleet arrived at the Spanish Canary Island of Tenerife to resupply with food and water, staying there for one week. One convict attempted to escape but they were generally well behaved.

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

5 August 1787

The journey across the Atlantic to South America was notably hot and uncomfortable. Disease and parasites like lice and roaches spread, while water was rationed. As a result, a number of convicts died. When the fleet reached Rio, Admiral Phillip ordered the ships be thoroughly cleaned.

Cape of Good Hope, South Africa

13 October 1787

Despite the punishment for lewd activities, promiscuity was rife aboard the ships, especially where the female convicts were allowed to exercise on deck. Undoubtedly, some had conceived children by the time the fleet had reached the southern tip of Africa, to resupply and pick up livestock for the new colony.

Botany Bay, Australia

18 January 1788

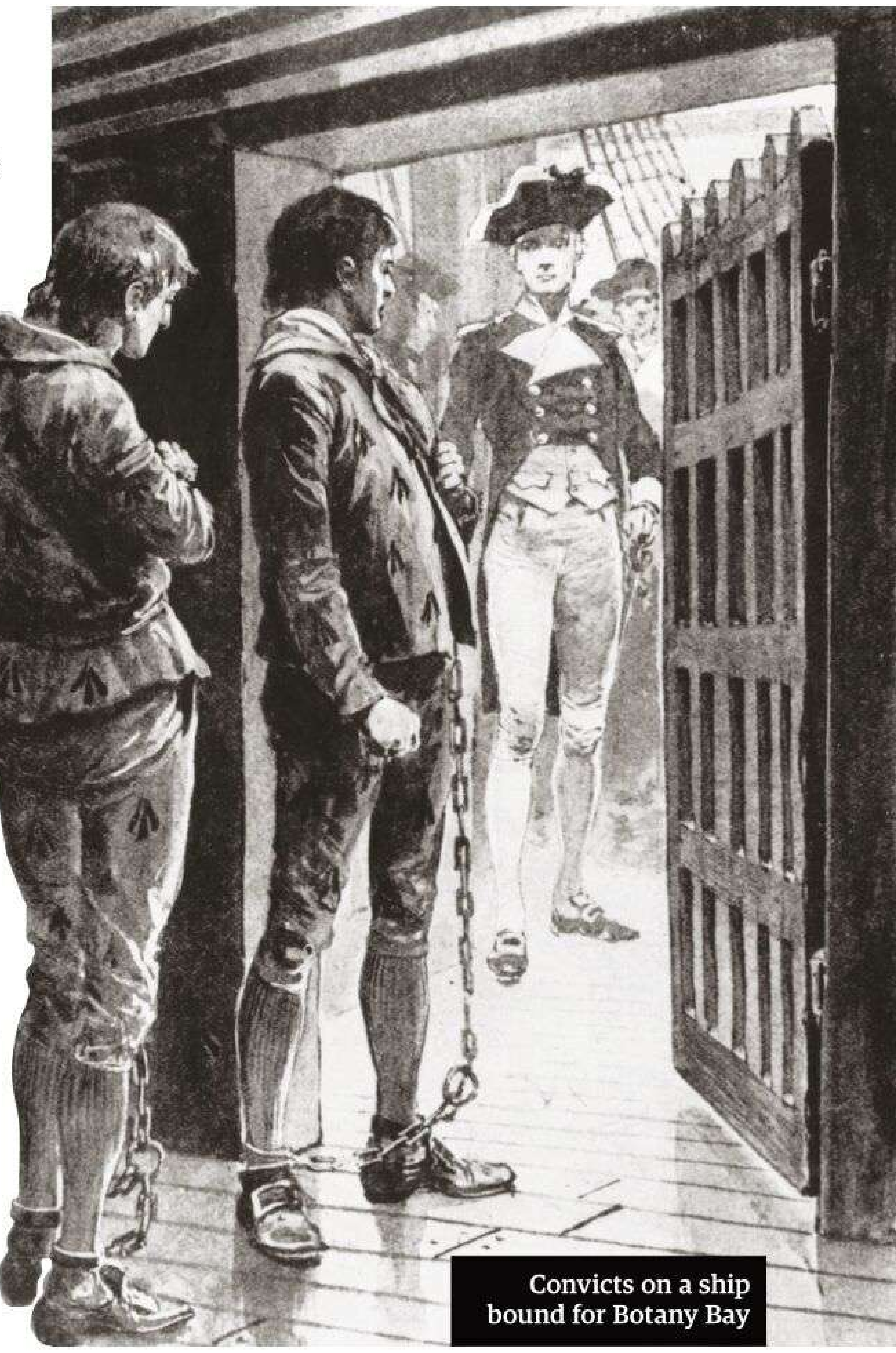
Having braved the fierce gales that are found below the 40th parallel south, the First Fleet made its way directly across the Indian Ocean to Australia, sighting Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) along the way before reaching Botany Bay on the east coast. It had travelled over 24,000 kilometres (15,000 miles), had lost only three per cent of the people it was carrying and not a single ship perished en route – an extremely successful result.

start. When they arrived, they were sent to a prison called a 'female factory', where they laundered clothes, sewed and spun while they were awaiting assignment. Many of the women transported to Australia's first penal colony brought children with them or had given birth at some point during the eight-month voyage. Their babies stayed with them until they were weaned, at which point they were taken away and put into an orphanage, where they could be claimed back once the mother had earned her freedom.

While life was hard for everyone when the Botany Bay colony was established, it was undoubtedly a better fate than some of the convicts would have met back in Britain. Records show that the quality of a convict's food was much better in Australia than it would have been in Britain. For some, there were ripe opportunities abound in this new land, too. With Botany Bay and Port Jackson growing every year, free men and women began to migrate from Britain to seek their fortune and to take advantage of the cheap labour the penal colonies offered. If a convict behaved, adhered to the rules and served their time, they were free to go. They could buy their passage back to Britain if they wished, but most chose to stay and not just because of the high price of a ticket: the stigma of being an ex-con in Britain simply didn't exist in this new land. Convicts had the opportunity to start again with a clean slate, take advantage of the many opportunities that Australia offered for a free, white European citizen and even climb the social ladder – something unthinkable back on British soil.

Over the following 50 years, public opinion would gradually turn against the Transportation Act as it became thought of as a particularly cruel form of punishment. In 1850, 17 years after slavery was finally abolished, transportation to the growing colonies in New South Wales was also abolished. But by then, hundreds of thousands of Europeans had settled in the new land, many of them changing their names and leaving a dark past behind them, setting the future course of this new Australian nation.

> "Convicts had the opportunity to start again with a clean slate, to take advantage of the opportunities Australia offered"



Convicts on a ship bound for Botany Bay

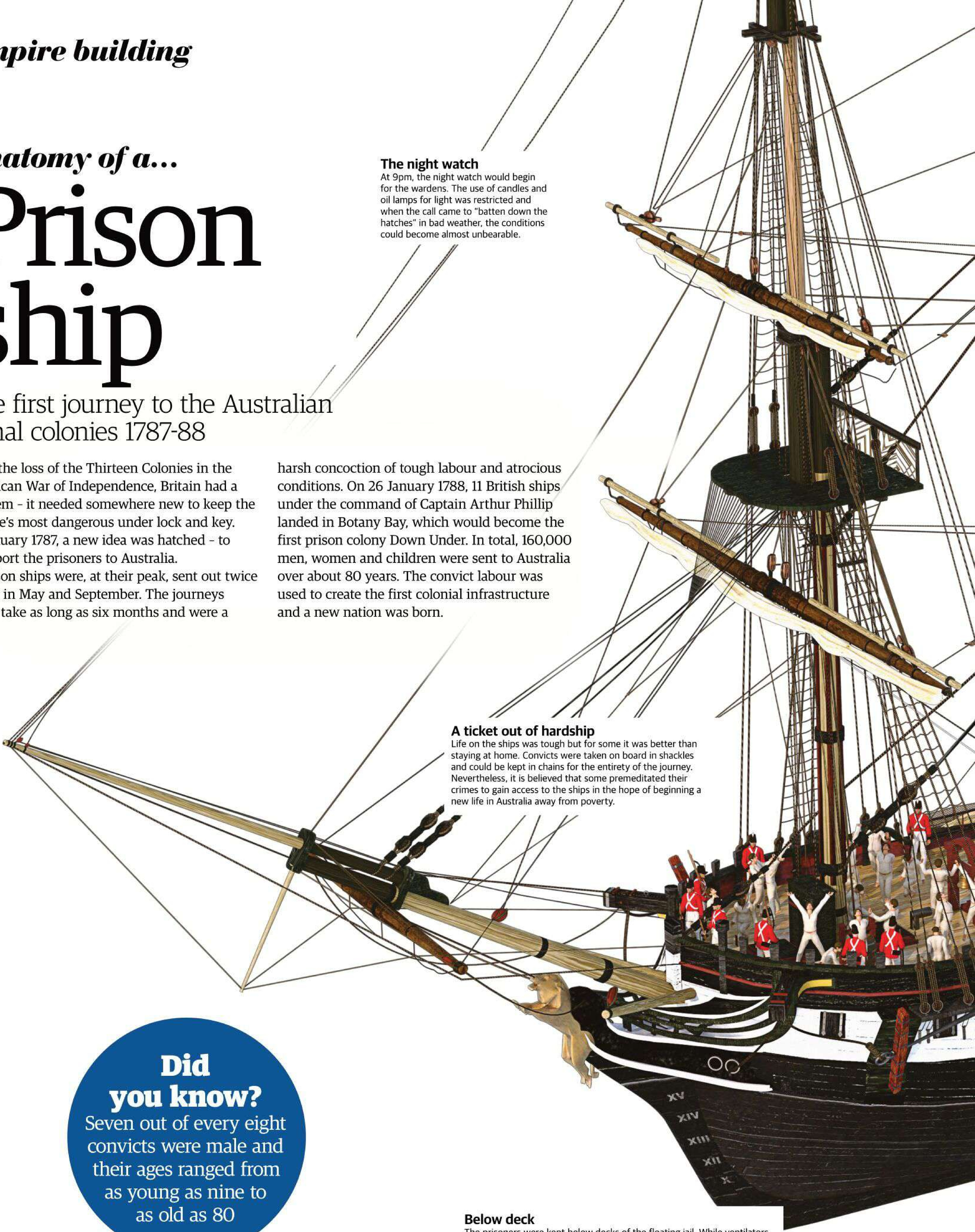
Anatomy of a…

Prison ship

The first journey to the Australian penal colonies 1787-88

After the loss of the Thirteen Colonies in the American War of Independence, Britain had a problem - it needed somewhere new to keep the empire's most dangerous under lock and key. In January 1787, a new idea was hatched - to transport the prisoners to Australia.

Prison ships were, at their peak, sent out twice a year in May and September. The journeys could take as long as six months and were a harsh concoction of tough labour and atrocious conditions. On 26 January 1788, 11 British ships under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip landed in Botany Bay, which would become the first prison colony Down Under. In total, 160,000 men, women and children were sent to Australia over about 80 years. The convict labour was used to create the first colonial infrastructure and a new nation was born.



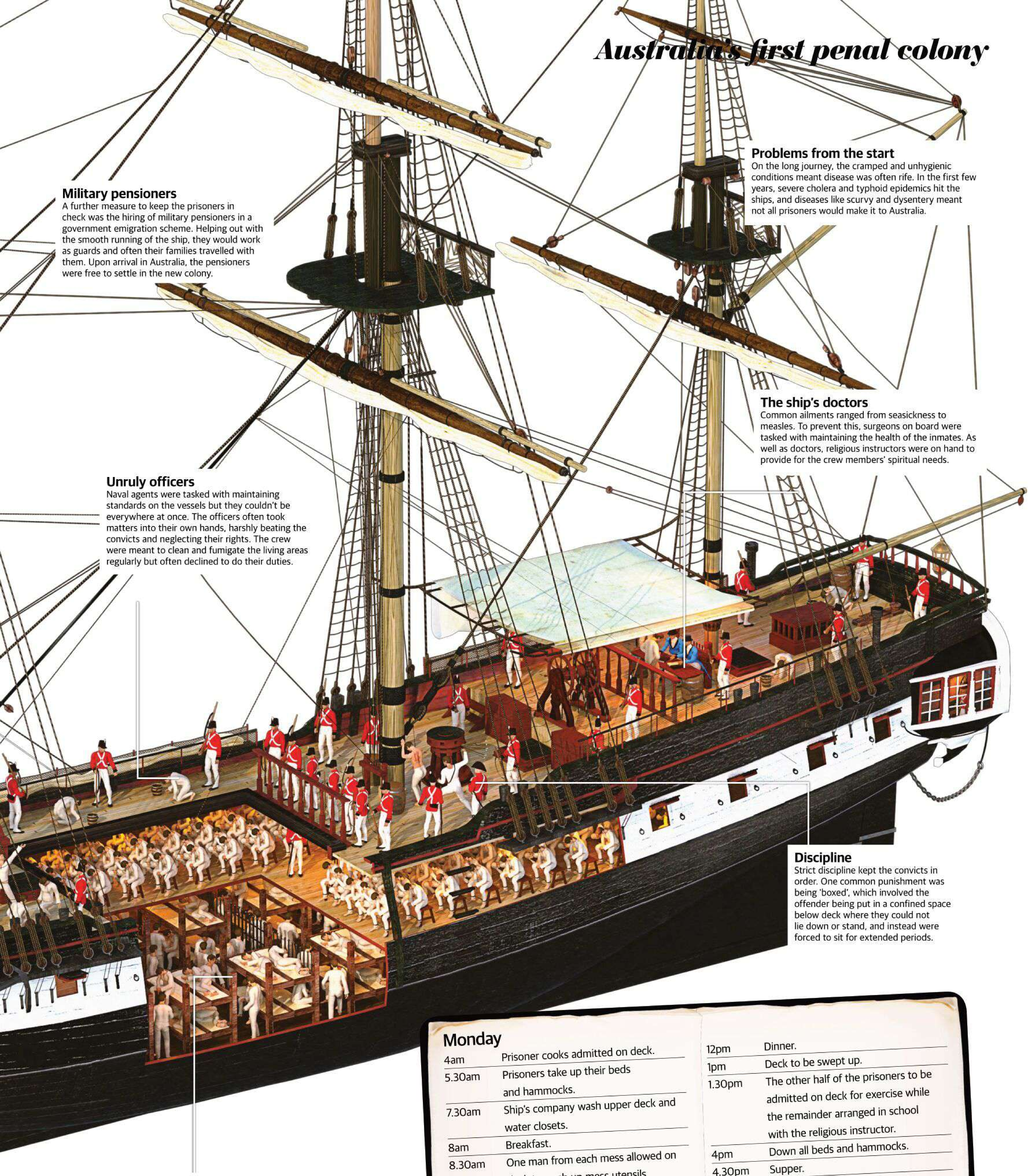
The night watch
At 9pm, the night watch would begin for the wardens. The use of candles and oil lamps for light was restricted and when the call came to "batten down the hatches" in bad weather, the conditions could become almost unbearable.

A ticket out of hardship
Life on the ships was tough but for some it was better than staying at home. Convicts were taken on board in shackles and could be kept in chains for the entirety of the journey. Nevertheless, it is believed that some premeditated their crimes to gain access to the ships in the hope of beginning a new life in Australia away from poverty.

Below deck
The prisoners were kept below decks of the floating jail. While ventilators were installed to help with air circulation, it was gloomy down below. Convicts were only allowed up above for exercise and duties. When livestock and plants were brought on board for food, conditions became even more cramped.

Did you know?
Seven out of every eight convicts were male and their ages ranged from as young as nine to as old as 80

Australia's first penal colony



Problems from the start
On the long journey, the cramped and unhygienic conditions meant disease was often rife. In the first few years, severe cholera and typhoid epidemics hit the ships, and diseases like scurvy and dysentery meant not all prisoners would make it to Australia.

Military pensioners
A further measure to keep the prisoners in check was the hiring of military pensioners in a government emigration scheme. Helping out with the smooth running of the ship, they would work as guards and often their families travelled with them. Upon arrival in Australia, the pensioners were free to settle in the new colony.

The ship's doctors
Common ailments ranged from seasickness to measles. To prevent this, surgeons on board were tasked with maintaining the health of the inmates. As well as doctors, religious instructors were on hand to provide for the crew members' spiritual needs.

Unruly officers
Naval agents were tasked with maintaining standards on the vessels but they couldn't be everywhere at once. The officers often took matters into their own hands, harshly beating the convicts and neglecting their rights. The crew were meant to clean and fumigate the living areas regularly but often declined to do their duties.

Discipline
Strict discipline kept the convicts in order. One common punishment was being 'boxed', which involved the offender being put in a confined space below deck where they could not lie down or stand, and instead were forced to sit for extended periods.

Living conditions
Bunks were lined up either side of the deck and separated from each other by boards, and the men, women and children slept in hammocks with two blankets on top. The portholes were barred and the poop deck was reserved solely for the crew. The men were meant to be provided with clothing but on some ships the funds meant to clothe the prisoners were pocketed by greedy captains.

© Nicholas Forder

Monday

4am	Prisoner cooks admitted on deck.
5.30am	Prisoners take up their beds and hammocks.
7.30am	Ship's company wash upper deck and water closets.
8am	Breakfast.
8.30am	One man from each mess allowed on deck to wash up mess utensils.
9.30am	Prison and prisoners inspected, then assembled on deck for prayers.
10am	One half of the prisoners sent on deck for exercise the other half being arranged in schools with the religious instructor.
12pm	Dinner.
1pm	Deck to be swept up.
1.30pm	The other half of the prisoners to be admitted on deck for exercise while the remainder arranged in school with the religious instructor.
4pm	Down all beds and hammocks.
4.30pm	Supper.
6.30pm	Prayers.
7pm	Petty officers of the day and night muster on deck.
8pm	Down all prisoners.
9pm	Rounds.

VICTORIA'S EMPIRE

Explore the Imperial Century, during which the empire was overseen by a much-loved monarch

90 The Imperial Century
Get an overview of the events that defined the 'long' 19th century

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Understand Queen Victoria's role in overseeing Britain as it reached the height of its influence

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Explore the advances of the Industrial Revolution that made Britain a global force

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Find out how this missionary's project to civilise Africa made him a national hero

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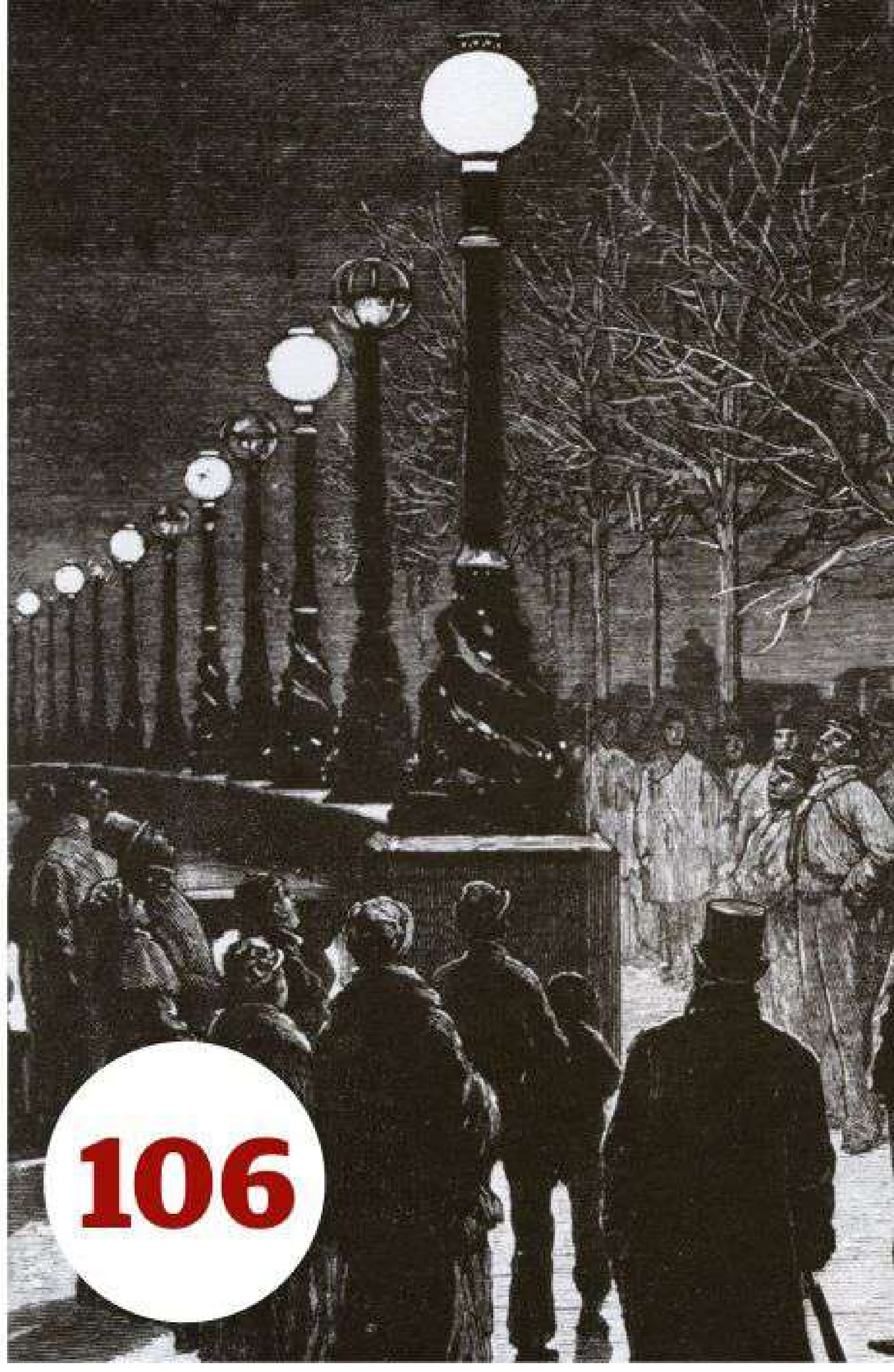
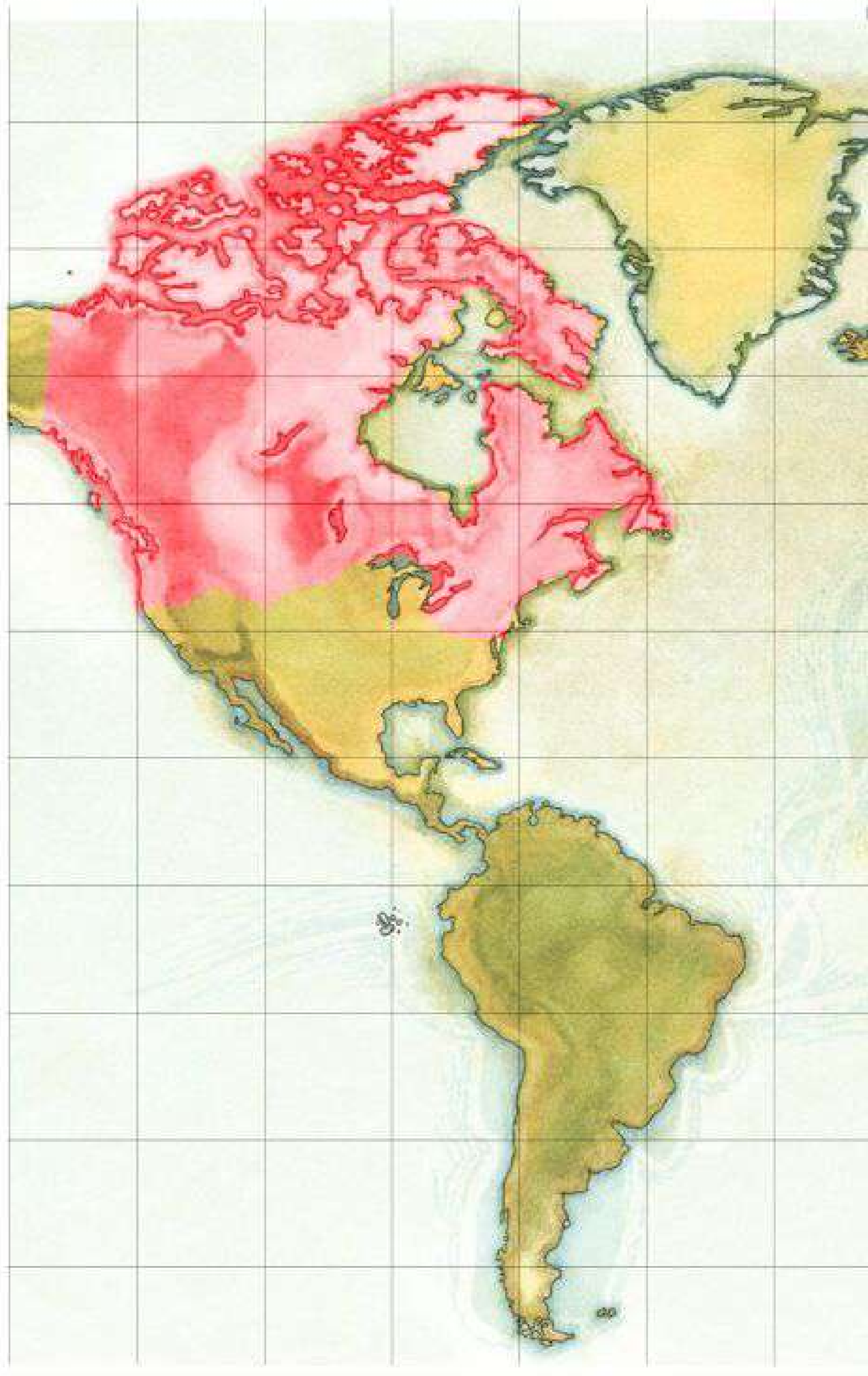
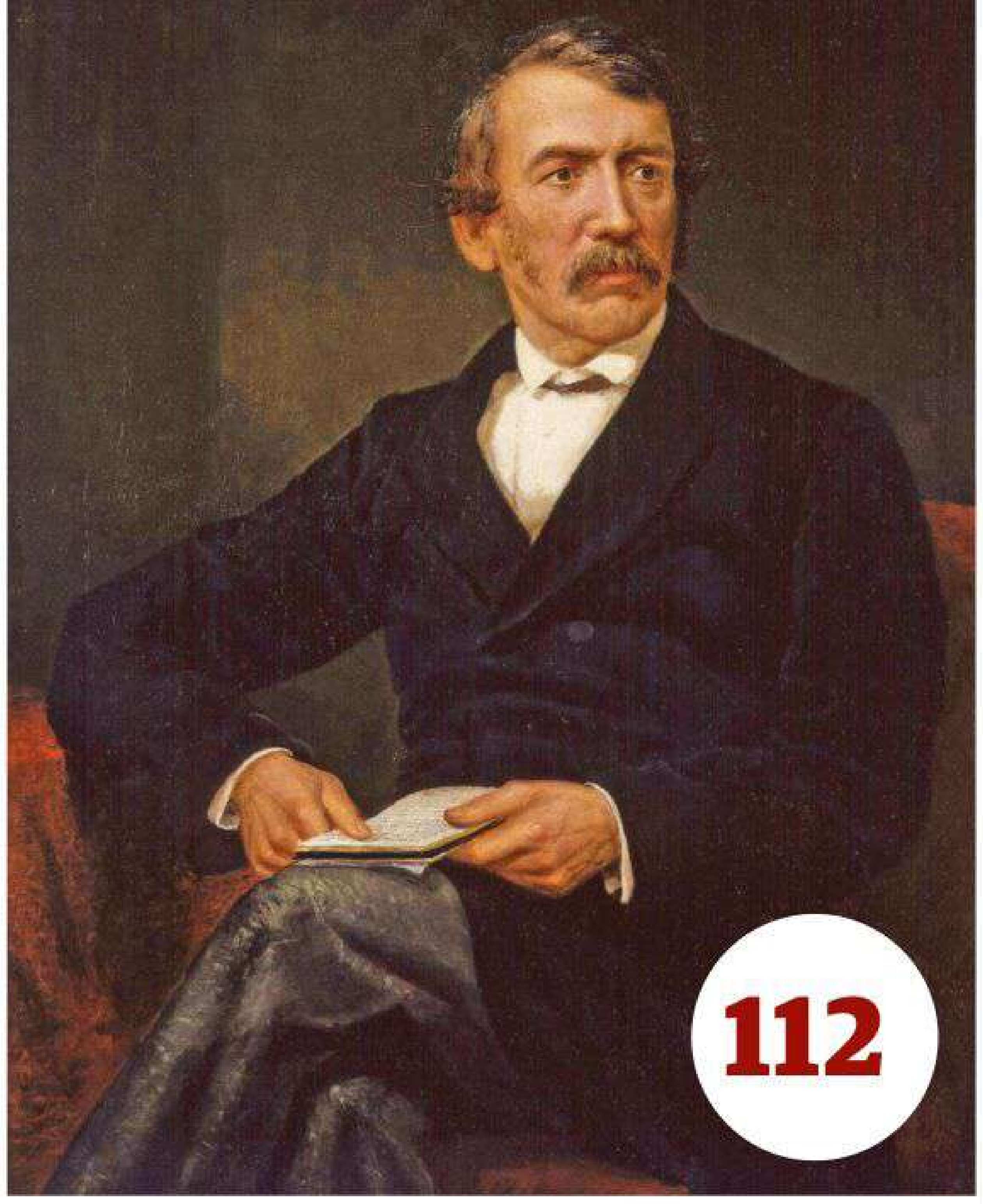
Discover how an Indian mutiny led to the British Raj's seizure of power



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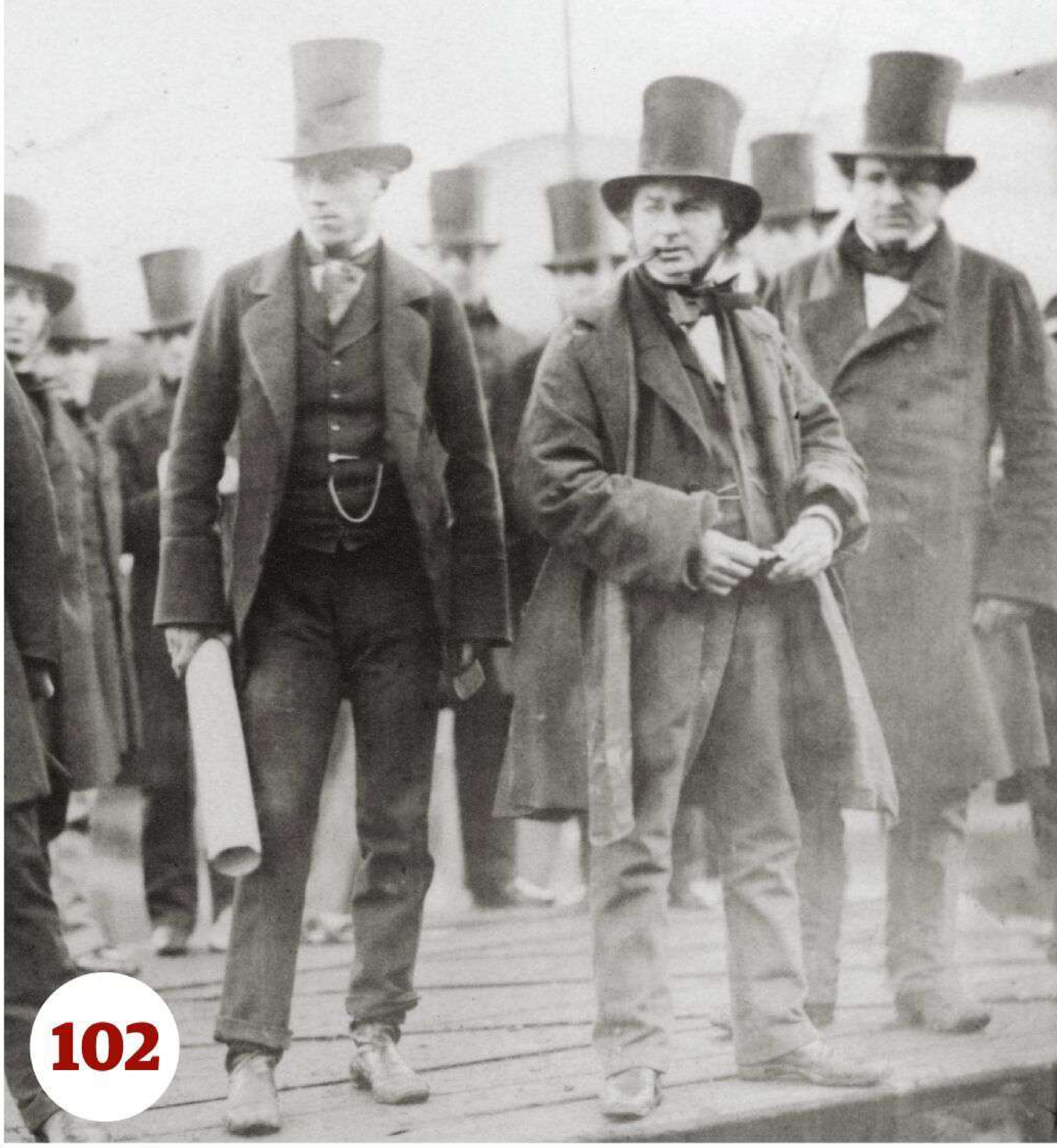
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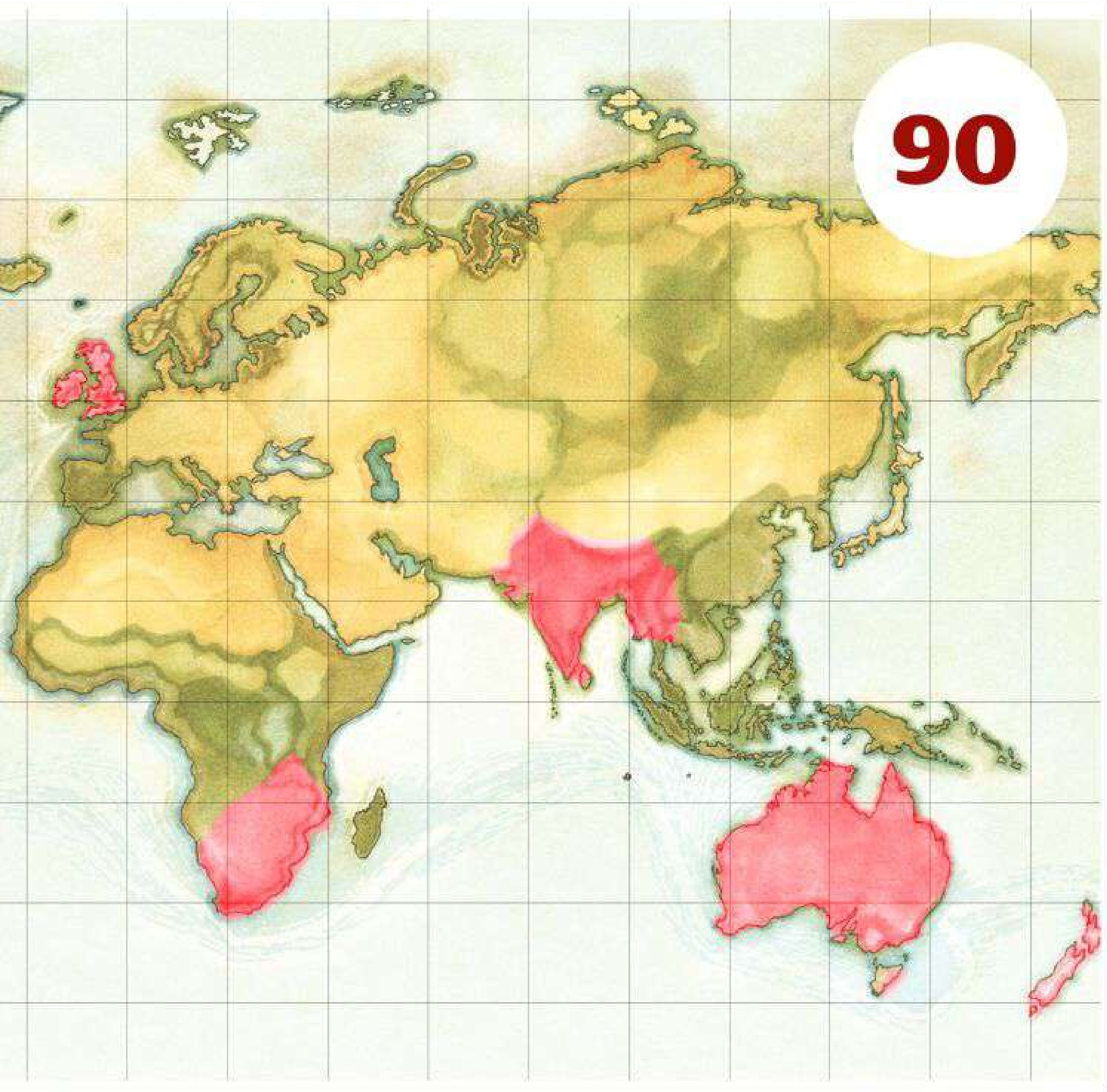
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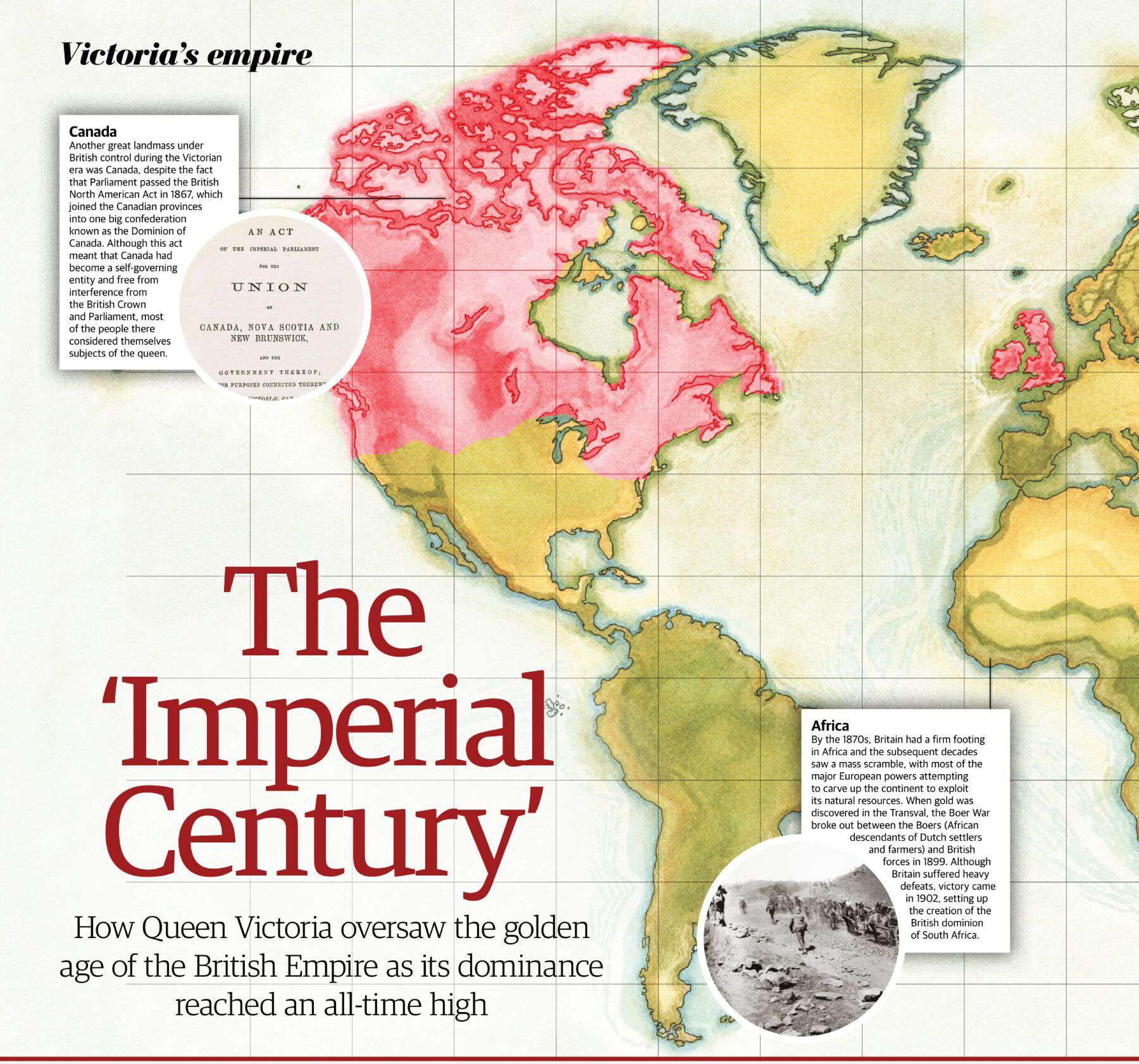


Canada
Another great landmass under British control during the Victorian era was Canada, despite the fact that Parliament passed the British North American Act in 1867, which joined the Canadian provinces into one big confederation known as the Dominion of Canada. Although this act meant that Canada had become a self-governing entity and free from interference from the British Crown and Parliament, most of the people there considered themselves subjects of the queen.

AN ACT
OF THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT
FOR THE
UNION
OF
CANADA, NOVA SCOTIA AND
NEW BRUNSWICK,
AND THE
GOVERNMENT THEREOF;
OR PURPOSES CONNECTED THEREW
ICTORIÆ, CAP

The 'Imperial Century'

How Queen Victoria oversaw the golden age of the British Empire as its dominance reached an all-time high

Africa
By the 1870s, Britain had a firm footing in Africa and the subsequent decades saw a mass scramble, with most of the major European powers attempting to carve up the continent to exploit its natural resources. When gold was discovered in the Transval, the Boer War broke out between the Boers (African descendants of Dutch settlers and farmers) and British forces in 1899. Although Britain suffered heavy defeats, victory came in 1902, setting up the creation of the British dominion of South Africa.

Some historians refer to the period between 1815 and 1914 as Britain's 'Imperial Century', a phrase that is backed up by the figures. During it, 10 million square miles of territory (and 400 million people) were added to the empire. However, whereas the Hanoverians of the 18th century had grabbed power in Asia, land in America and slaves in Africa, and in the process either taxing, robbing, or wiping out the native people, the Victorians had even loftier aspirations of not just conquering the world, but redeeming it, too – not least the 'Dark Continent' of Africa.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, Britain already governed Canada, large parts of India, Australia and New Zealand, as well as parts of South America and Africa. From the 1870s, in search of new markets for trade (facing competition from France and Germany), Britain set out to gain control and influence over new territories, particularly Africa. By 1900, Britain had gained control of Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and southern Africa (including Zimbabwe, previously known as Rhodesia, after Cecil Rhodes). From 1875, Britain also controlled the Suez Canal, a small waterway in Egypt linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. This canal shortened the route to India, providing access to the East and, from 1882, gave Britain effective rule over Egypt.

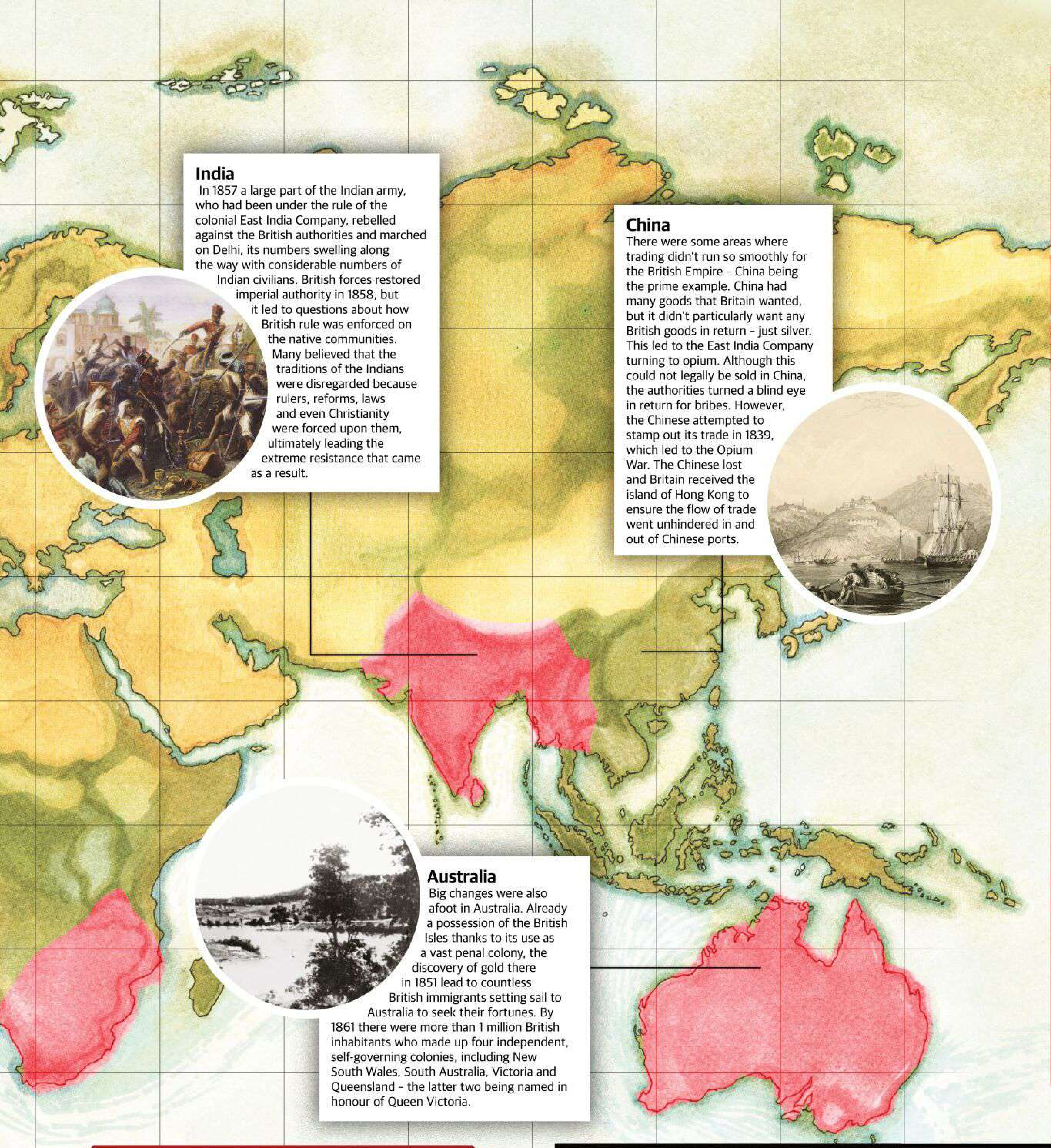
Then there was the 'Jewel in the Crown': the subcontinent of India. India had been under the military domination of the East India Company for over 150 years, but the framework for British India was completed in 1849 with the annexation of the Punjab region and the governorship of Lord Dailhouse. In 1857-1858, a great mutiny occurred as the native population staged an uprising against the East India Company's regime. British troops were sent to aid the company's privately run armed forces and there were many casualties on both sides. The British forces ultimately won and direct rule over India was placed in the hands of the British Crown and its army. Victoria was crowned

Global supremacy

Economic, industrial and colonial consolidation

TERRITORY GAINED + OR LOST? −

1839	+	HONG KONG
1840	+	NEW ZEALAND
1842	−	KABUL
1843	+	HAWAII
1848	+	ORANGE RIVER COLONY
1849	+	PUNJAB
1849	+	BRITISH COLUMBIA
1858	+	INDIA
1860	+	PEKING
1874	+	FIJI
1877	+	TRANSVAL
1878	+	AFGHANISTAN
1881	+	SUEZ CANAL ZONE
1882	+	EGYPT
1885	+	BECHUANALAND
1886	+	BURMA
1887	+	ZULULAND
1888	+	COOK ISLANDS
1889	+	JARVIS ISLAND
1891	+	HARARE
1898	+	SUDAN



India

In 1857 a large part of the Indian army, who had been under the rule of the colonial East India Company, rebelled against the British authorities and marched on Delhi, its numbers swelling along the way with considerable numbers of Indian civilians. British forces restored imperial authority in 1858, but it led to questions about how British rule was enforced on the native communities. Many believed that the traditions of the Indians were disregarded because rulers, reforms, laws and even Christianity were forced upon them, ultimately leading the extreme resistance that came as a result.

China

There were some areas where trading didn't run so smoothly for the British Empire – China being the prime example. China had many goods that Britain wanted, but it didn't particularly want any British goods in return – just silver. This led to the East India Company turning to opium. Although this could not legally be sold in China, the authorities turned a blind eye in return for bribes. However, the Chinese attempted to stamp out its trade in 1839, which led to the Opium War. The Chinese lost and Britain received the island of Hong Kong to ensure the flow of trade went unhindered in and out of Chinese ports.

Australia

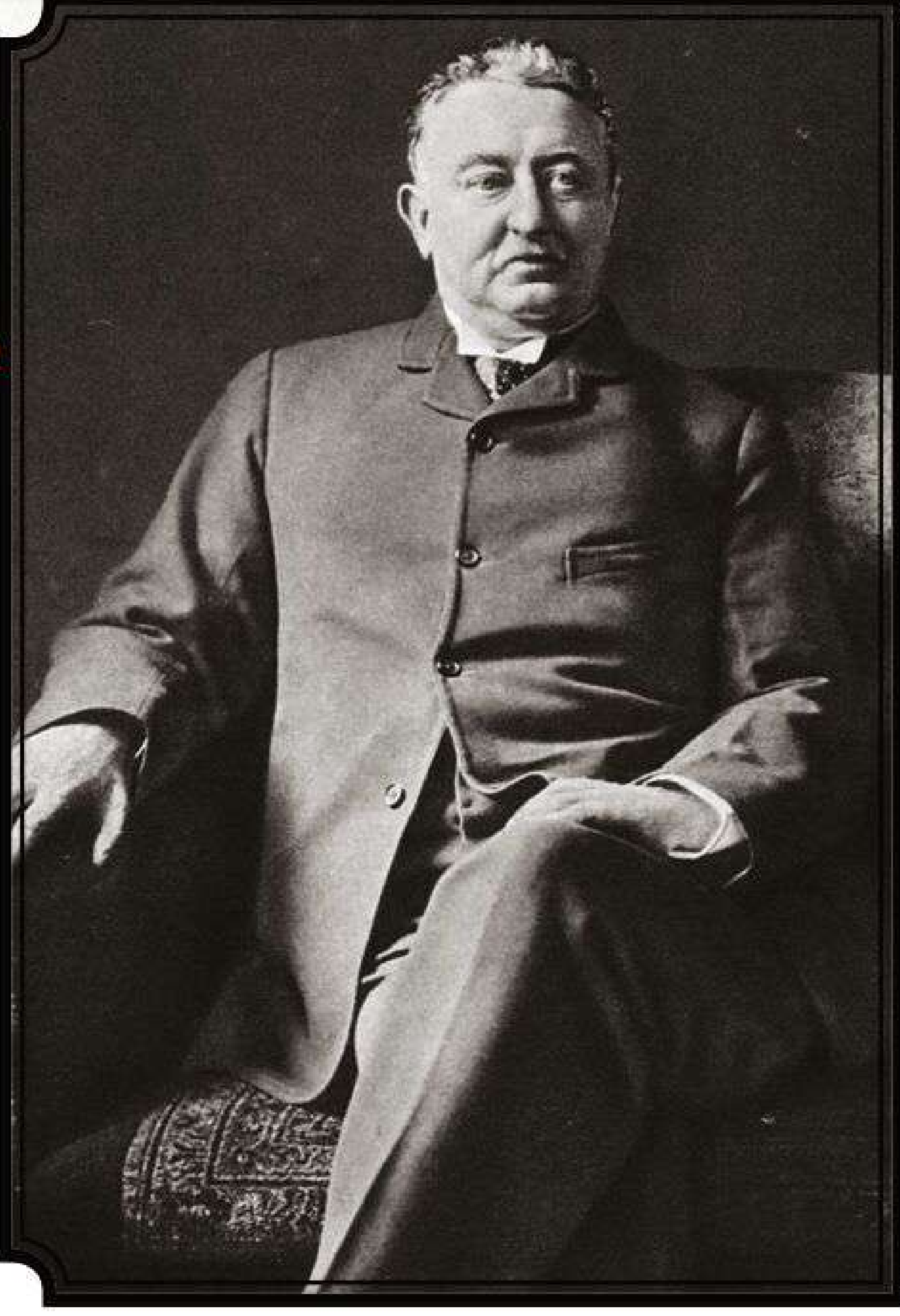
Big changes were also afoot in Australia. Already a possession of the British Isles thanks to its use as a vast penal colony, the discovery of gold there in 1851 lead to countless British immigrants setting sail to Australia to seek their fortunes. By 1861 there were more than 1 million British inhabitants who made up four independent, self-governing colonies, including New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland – the latter two being named in honour of Queen Victoria.

Key

🟥 *Territories of the British Empire in 1901*

Empress of India in 1846 and British rule over the country continued well into the 20th century.

As her empire grew larger and larger, Queen Victoria's popularity at home increased. After all, benefits of the empire to the British economy were enormous, including vast tracts of lands from which to harvest natural resources and ready-made markets established around the globe with whom to trade goods manufactured in Britain. The emergence of steam-powered vessels to make the traversing the oceans easier brought these markets within easy reach of British traders and led to many of Victoria's subjects ascending to the top of the economic pyramid.



Influential figure

Cecil Rhodes

1853-1903

Cecil Rhodes was pivotal in colonial expansion in Africa. Arriving in Kimberley aged 18 in 1871, the year diamond-bearing lodes are discovered there, Rhodes became a successful entrepreneur by buying out the claims of other prospectors. By the late 1880s he applied the same techniques to the gold fields in the Transval; by the end of the decade he dominated the South African export of gold and diamonds. Using his considerable wealth to establish colonies north of the Transval, his dream was to create a continuous strip of imperial territory from the Cape to the Nile. He faced competition from the Portuguese (who could press west from Mozambique) and the Germans (who were allowed to settle in Tanganyika), but in persuading the British government to secure Bechuanaland, he gained a springboard from which to push north. With mining rights to Zimbabwe he was able to send colonists north from Bechuanaland in 1890 to Harare, an area declared a British protectorate in 1891.

1837-1901

Victoria's empire

With a long-reigning and cherished monarch at the helm, how one tiny island came to rule a domain that spanned over quarter of the world's surface

The date was 22 January 1901 and the British Empire was the largest of any in human history, but the monarch who reigned over it would not live another day. As Queen Victoria lay dying in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight she looked back on a reign that spanned over 63 years. She had seen her empire grow from a collection of scattered isles separated by vast plains of lands and insurmountable oceans, to the greatest the world had known. It had reached over India, plucked its riches and mounted the nation as the glimmering jewel in Victoria's crown. It had butchered its way mercilessly across Africa at the cost of thousands of British corpses and countless natives who had tried in vain to stand in its way. It was powered forward both by Christian values and colonial greed. So, as Victoria drew her last breath, she left a world forever transformed by the empire she had built.

When a young Princess Victoria ascended the steps of Westminster Abbey on her coronation day, few could have foreseen the mighty empire she would eventually rule over. The British public were increasingly disenchanted with the monarchy; her grandfather, the mad king George III, had failed to protect British interests in the Americas, and her uncle George IV's terrible relations with his wife and reckless spending had tarnished the monarchy's prestige. At a mere 18 years and barely 150 centimetres (five feet) tall, Victoria hardly seemed a fitting patron for the vast ambitions of British expansion that started in the 17th century. But this blue-eyed, silvery-voiced lady possessed a stubborn will of iron and her reign would become the longest in British history. Her ascension marked not the death of the British Empire, but the new dawn of a kingdom so massive that none could ever hope to challenge it.

The world was changing as Victoria took her place on the throne. The tiny, scattered rural villages of England were being abandoned *en masse* and the cities were transforming into sprawling metropolises. Great towering concrete chimneys rose from the ground and the whirr of

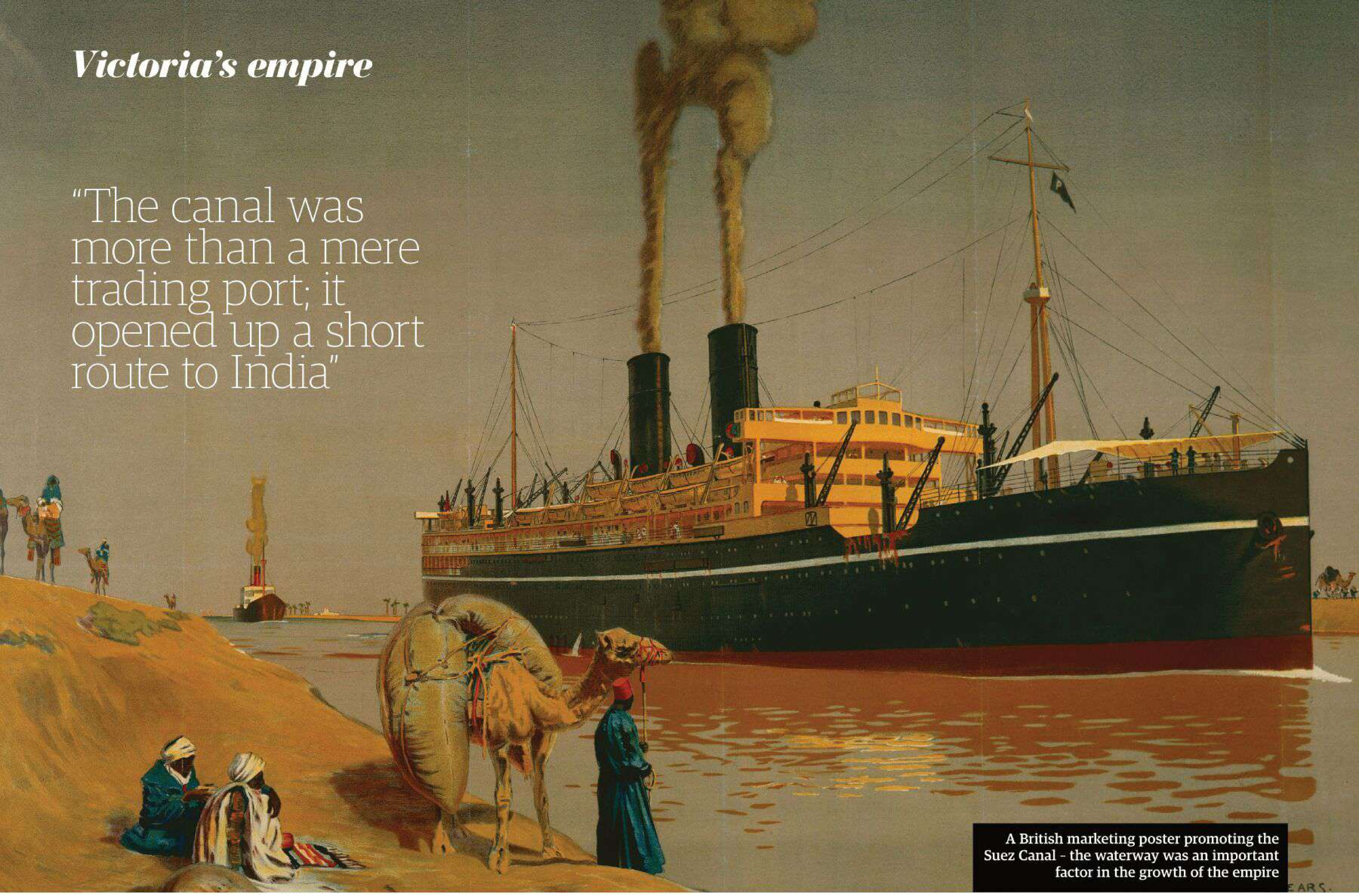
> "The British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world"

QUEEN VICTORIA

1819-1901

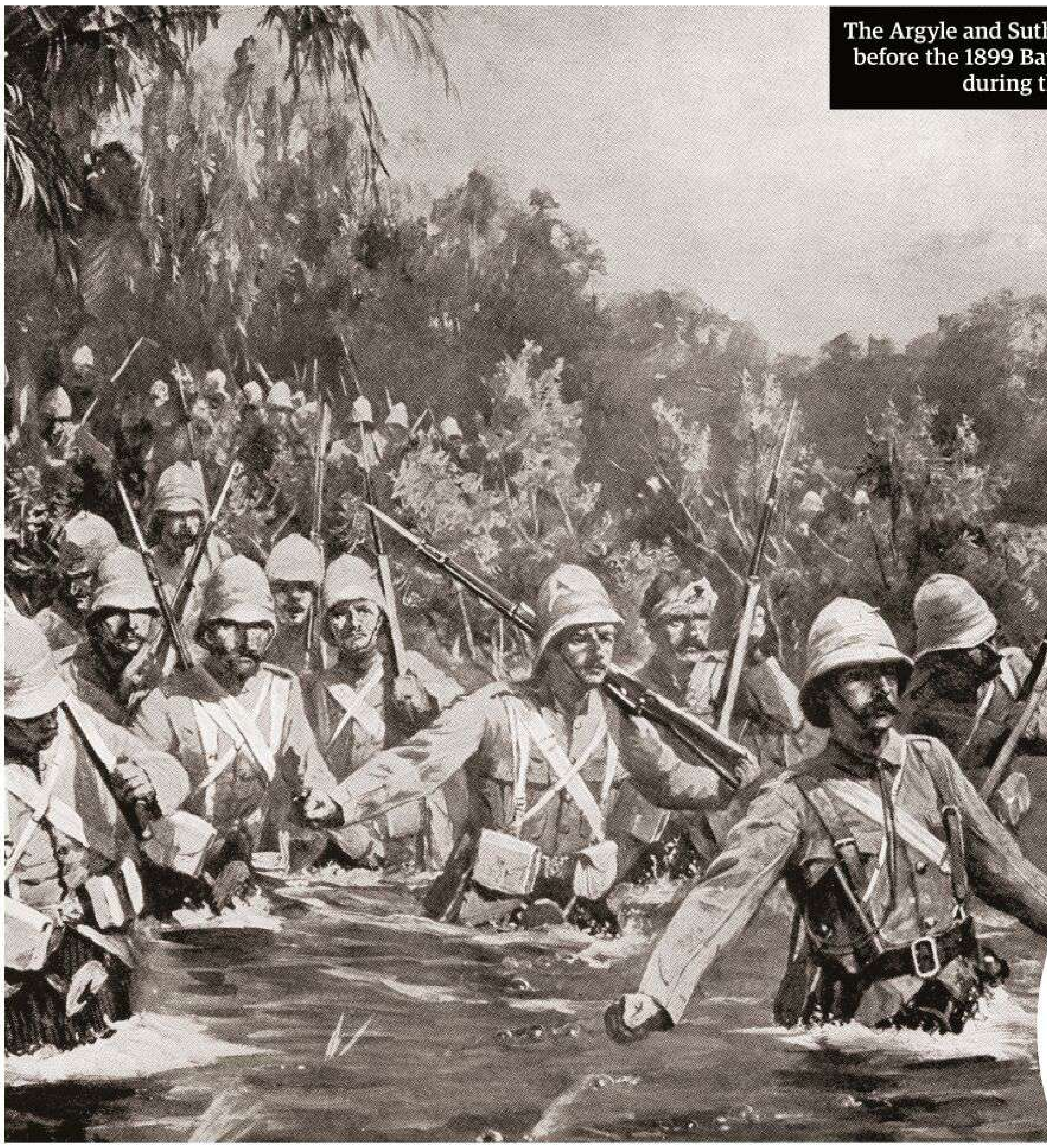
Brief Bio

Victoria served as monarch of the United Kingdom from 20 June 1837 until her death on 22 January 1901. At 63 years, her reign is currently the longest in British history, and is associated with the Industrial Revolution, economic progress and, most notably, the expansion of the British Empire to the largest domain of all time.



> "The canal was more than a mere trading port; it opened up a short route to India"

A British marketing poster promoting the Suez Canal – the waterway was an important factor in the growth of the empire



The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders before the 1899 Battle of Modder River during the Second Boer War

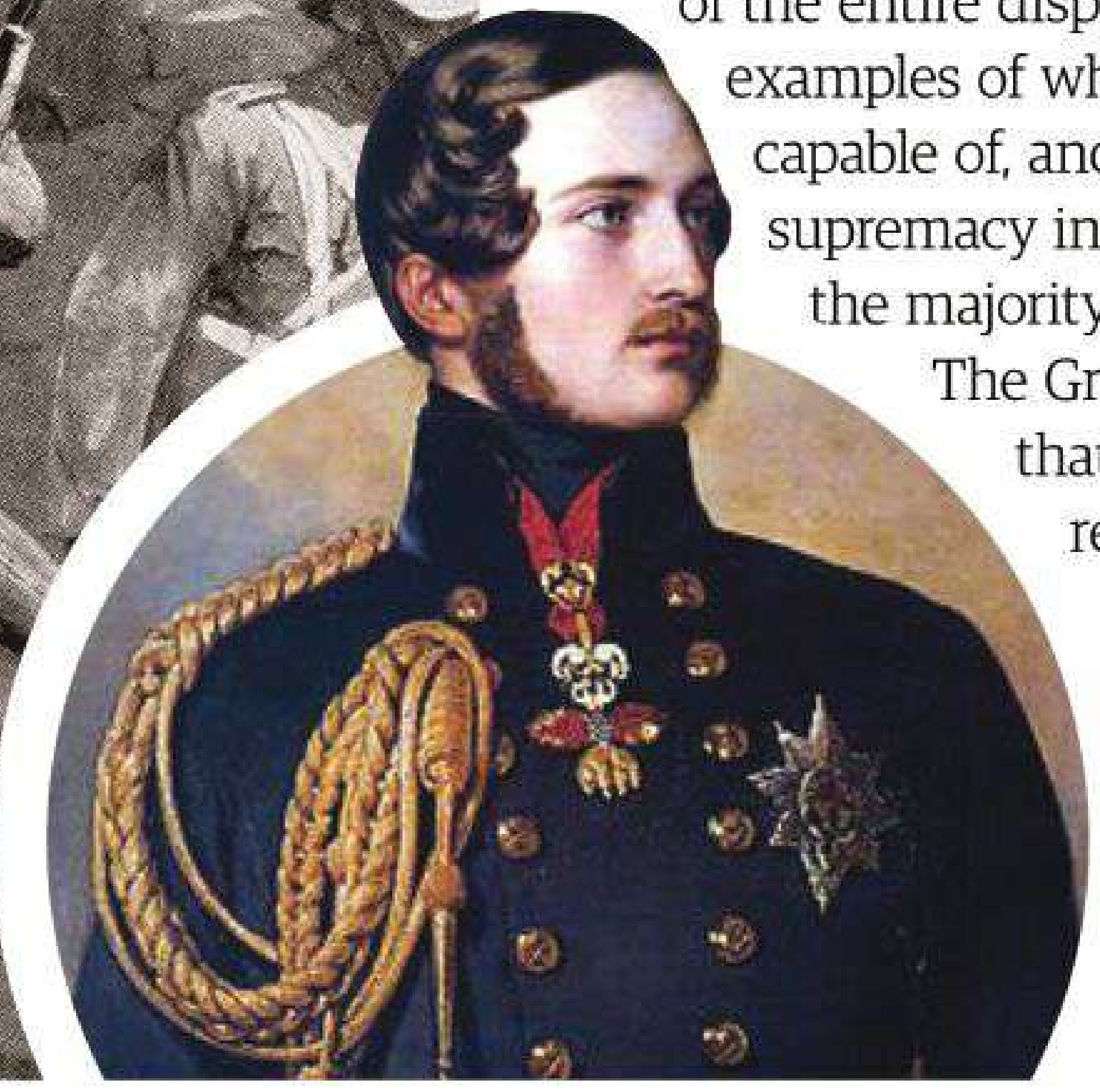
© Alamy; Corbis

machines sounded across the country – the age of steam had arrived. The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation on the edge of Europe to a manufacturing colossus. Railways and steamships brought the British overseas territory closer to their mother country, opening up opportunities for trade and commerce that had previously been unfathomable.

It was Albert, Victoria's beloved husband, who opened her and Britain's eyes to the ideas that went on to shape her empire. Fascinated by mechanisms and inventions, Albert organised The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace – a temple to the ingenuity of the rapidly developing modern world. Inventions from around the world were displayed, but this was Britain's show, first and foremost. The symbols of British might, which occupied half of the entire display space, served as clear examples of what the British Empire was capable of, and fostered ideas of national supremacy in Victoria, the government and the majority of the British population.

The Great Exhibition proved that, far from the crumbling remains of a once-powerful nation, the British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world.

The opportunity to pave the way for this empire arose in 1857 with



"The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation into a manufacturing giant"

the Indian Mutiny. India had been ruled by a private entity – the East India Company – since 1757. The rebellion manifested the discontent felt by the Indian people for the blatant disrespect of their beliefs and customs. The company showed disregard for the Indian caste system and issued new cartridges greased with cow and pig fat that had to be opened with the mouth, which was highly offensive to Muslim and Hindu soldiers. These actions opened the eyes of the Indian people to the daily injustice they were being subjected to, and unrest snowballed into mass riots and an uprising. Although the mutiny was eventually quelled, the rebellion led to the dissolution of the company, the passing of power to the British state and the creation of the British Indian Empire.

Queen Victoria welcomed the country to her empire in a lavish ceremony, promising that Indian native customs and religions would be respected and that she would "draw a veil over the sad and bloody past." She presented herself as a maternal figure and a crusader for peace, justice and honest government – ideals largely inspired by her husband. Albert had instilled in her mind the vision of King Arthur's Camelot, an empire ruled not by tyranny but by justice, where the strong serve the weak, where good triumphs over evil, bringing not oppression and bloodshed, but trade, education and welfare. His influence on Victoria was immense and when, on 14 December 1861, he died of suspected typhoid fever, the empire veered in an entirely new direction.

Despite her powerful personality, Queen Victoria was only five feet tall and would boast an impressive 50-inch waist

When Albert drew his last breath in the blue room at Windsor Castle the queen was inconsolable; the loss of the love of her life changed not only herself as a person, but the fate of her empire. As she donned the mourning clothes she would wear until her own death, she drew a veil over Albert's vision and pursued a different path for her kingdom – one of world domination.

An emerging figure in Parliament would come to foster her views: Benjamin Disraeli. The ambitious and rebellious leader of the Conservatives was led by a passion for imperial power and glory. Inspired by tales of imperial adventures, Disraeli believed Britain should pursue an empire of power and prestige. His most direct political opponent represented everything Albert dreamed the empire could be. William Gladstone, the leader of the Liberals, thought the empire should serve a high moral purpose, to follow not a path of conquest but one of commerce, sharing their moral vision with the world.

These two fiery and driven men fought over these opposing visions in Parliament while Victoria continued to mourn. Without Albert she felt incompetent and unable to face the immense duty that her role dictated. With her strong conservative views she found Gladstone and his liberal reforms dangerous and unpredictable. Disraeli, suave, coy and dripping with forthright confidence, enchanted the lonely queen. With his constant flattery and sharp wit, Disraeli reignited her interest in politics and captivated her, as Albert had done so previously, with his vision of just how mighty the empire could be. However, Gladstone's liberal vision and Albert's quest for Camelot had not completely faded. The British people, led by strong Protestant beliefs Victoria herself had instilled in them, felt it was Britain's role – its duty even – to 'civilise' people around the world. They believed the British cause was to export not only trade but also gospel values of morality and justice.

It was in pursuit of this lofty goal that many missionaries turned their attention to Africa. Little was known of the 'Dark Continent', but the common perception was that it was a place of pagan worship ravaged by tribal wars. One missionary in particular would capture the attention of the British nation. Tall, handsome and heroic, David Livingstone embodied everything the British believed their nation represented. A medical missionary, Livingstone's daring adventures around the continent were followed by a captivated British public. Fighting vicious beasts, battling through dense jungles and suffering a multitude of illnesses, Livingstone was the heroic face of the empire's Christian ideals.

Livingstone's horrific confrontation with African chain gangs was to drive the British cause of expansion. The slavery rife in Africa was abhorrent to Livingstone and the British public, as the practice had been abolished across the empire in 1833. The queen and government united behind Livingstone's quest to find a suitable trade route, hoping that by doing so the African people would find ways of making a living that wasn't built on the backs of slaves. Livingstone's journey was a failure and he returned to scathing criticism – something the imperialist Disraeli leapt on with glee. His flattery of Victoria had completely won her over, and the monarchy and government became united in the pursuit of one goal – the expansion of the empire.

The perfect opportunity to begin this new project emerged as another nation struggled to survive. The Egyptian ruler, Isma'il Pasha, was confronted

How Queen Victoria came to rule the world

Dominance of the seas

Britain employed a 'two-power standard' in 1889, which called for the Royal Navy to maintain a force at least equal to the combined strength of the next two largest navies in the world. This policy ensured British dominance of the seas with a string of naval bases encompassing the whole world. The sheer size and strength of the Navy served its purpose, deterring any would-be competitors and confirming its position as ruler of the waves.

The Industrial Revolution

Britain was the first nation to harness the power of steam and the first to undergo an industrial revolution. This resulted in the mass production of low-cost goods to trade around the world. It also gave Britain's military an array of resources like rifles, steamships and trains, equipping it to defeat any possible enemies. Medical advances also allowed British explorers to penetrate remote areas without fear of tropical diseases.

The quest to spread democracy

Land grabbing aside, the British Empire was led by a strong Protestant desire to improve the world. Britain saw itself as an agent of civilisation – one they wanted to spread worldwide, bringing peace, order and stability. This belief that they were doing genuine good led men like David Livingstone to travel to Africa to spread the word of God, and with it, the British Empire.

Taking advantage of the competition

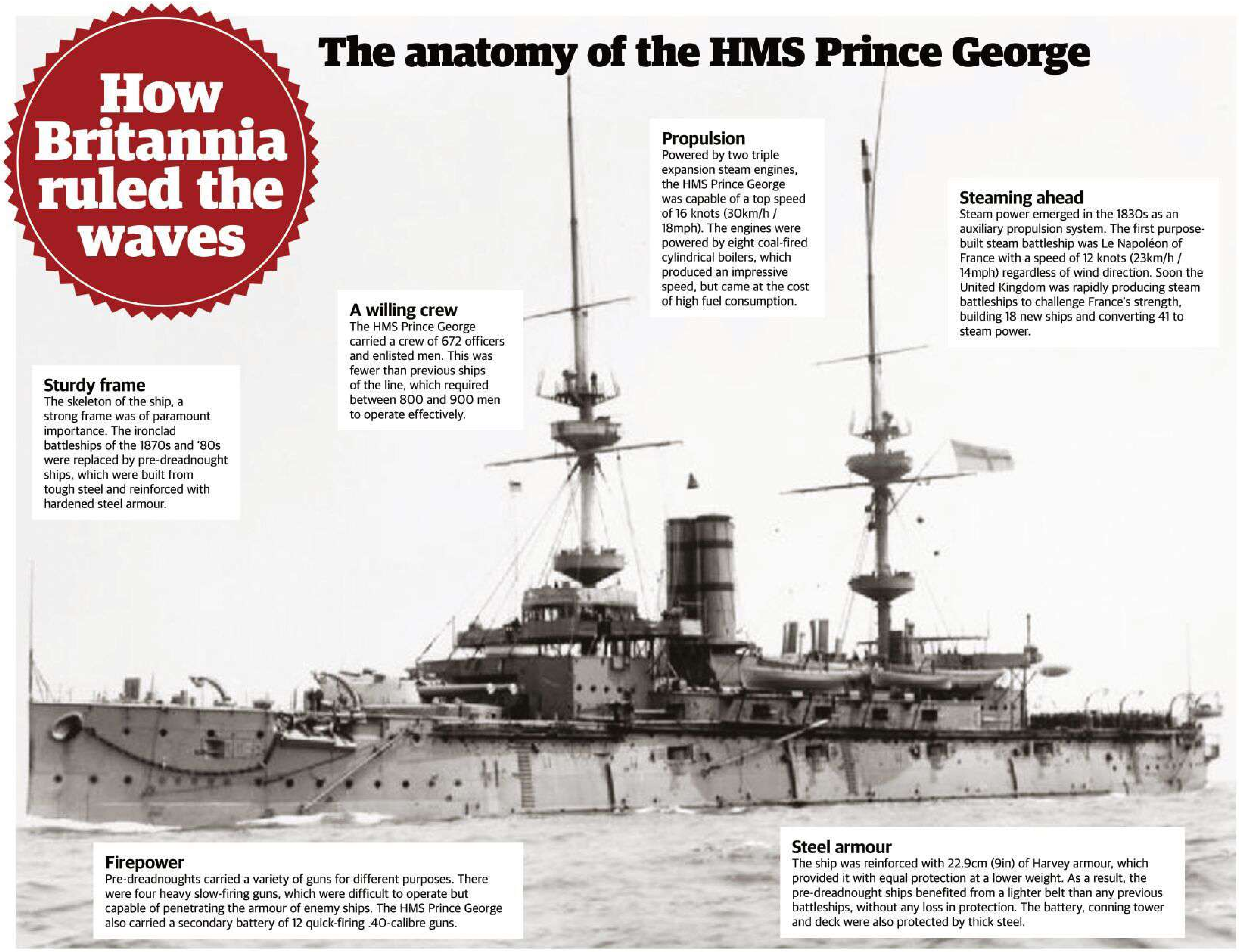
As major powers of the world such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and the Ottomans were losing power, the British began to peak in strength. Britain was able to take advantage of the European wars that had weakened other nations as it enjoyed a period of relative peace, allowing uninterrupted expansion of its empire. Any threats that did emerge, such as Russia, just gave Britain new zeal to cement its powerful hold on the world.

Strong leadership

Britain was ruled by a single monarch throughout most of the 19th century – Queen Victoria. The record-breaking length of her reign brought a sense of stability and contributed to the unconquerable notion of the British Empire. Although Victoria did involve herself in government, her role was symbolic rather than one of direct power, which ensured stability of British politics. While other nations were dealing with socialist movements, Britain enjoyed a long period of relative domestic peace.

How Britannia ruled the waves

The anatomy of the HMS Prince George



Propulsion
Powered by two triple expansion steam engines, the HMS Prince George was capable of a top speed of 16 knots (30km/h / 18mph). The engines were powered by eight coal-fired cylindrical boilers, which produced an impressive speed, but came at the cost of high fuel consumption.

Steaming ahead
Steam power emerged in the 1830s as an auxiliary propulsion system. The first purpose-built steam battleship was Le Napoléon of France with a speed of 12 knots (23km/h / 14mph) regardless of wind direction. Soon the United Kingdom was rapidly producing steam battleships to challenge France's strength, building 18 new ships and converting 41 to steam power.

A willing crew
The HMS Prince George carried a crew of 672 officers and enlisted men. This was fewer than previous ships of the line, which required between 800 and 900 men to operate effectively.

Sturdy frame
The skeleton of the ship, a strong frame was of paramount importance. The ironclad battleships of the 1870s and '80s were replaced by pre-dreadnought ships, which were built from tough steel and reinforced with hardened steel armour.

Firepower
Pre-dreadnoughts carried a variety of guns for different purposes. There were four heavy slow-firing guns, which were difficult to operate but capable of penetrating the armour of enemy ships. The HMS Prince George also carried a secondary battery of 12 quick-firing .40-calibre guns.

Steel armour
The ship was reinforced with 22.9cm (9in) of Harvey armour, which provided it with equal protection at a lower weight. As a result, the pre-dreadnought ships benefited from a lighter belt than any previous battleships, without any loss in protection. The battery, conning tower and deck were also protected by thick steel.

by crippling debts after reckless spending on lavish ceremonies and a costly war with Ethiopia. In an act of desperation he made an offer to sell Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal to the British. The canal was more than a mere trading port; it opened up a short route to India across Egypt and down the Red Sea, cutting out the lengthy journey around Africa. The Egyptian ruler's offer would give the British a controlling influence over the jugular of the empire. Disraeli urged Victoria to accept, she immediately grabbed the opportunity and the Suez Canal fell into British hands.

With control of India, Britain was already the most powerful nation on Earth and three-quarters of the world's trade was transported in British ships, but this control was being threatened. The Russian Empire had been steadily expanding east and south, and was getting uncomfortably close to Victoria's prized jewel – India. The Middle East was largely controlled by the Turks, but they were busy dealing with violent rebellions. The Turkish treatment of their Christian subjects was shocking and atrocious, but as Russia backed the rebels the British had no option but to support the Turks. The British public, to whom Russia stood for everything Britain opposed – ignorance, slavery and subjugation – largely supported this choice. Facing the prospect of imminent war with the strongest nation on the planet, Russia agreed to peace talks and thanks, in part, to the charisma and negotiation skills of Disraeli, the country agreed to stop their advance on the Middle East.

Imperial spirit rushed through the public as the British muscle flexed and proved its might again. As the empire continued its steady expansion across the continent, it came face-to-face with the most powerful African nation – the Zulus. The British, with a bloated ego, underestimated the strength of their spear-wielding enemies and suffered a crushing initial defeat. In the end it took 16,000 British reinforcements to prise the Zulus' independence from their grip. Expecting to return to a wave of praise for their daring exploits, the victorious army was surprised to discover that British opinions were changing once again.

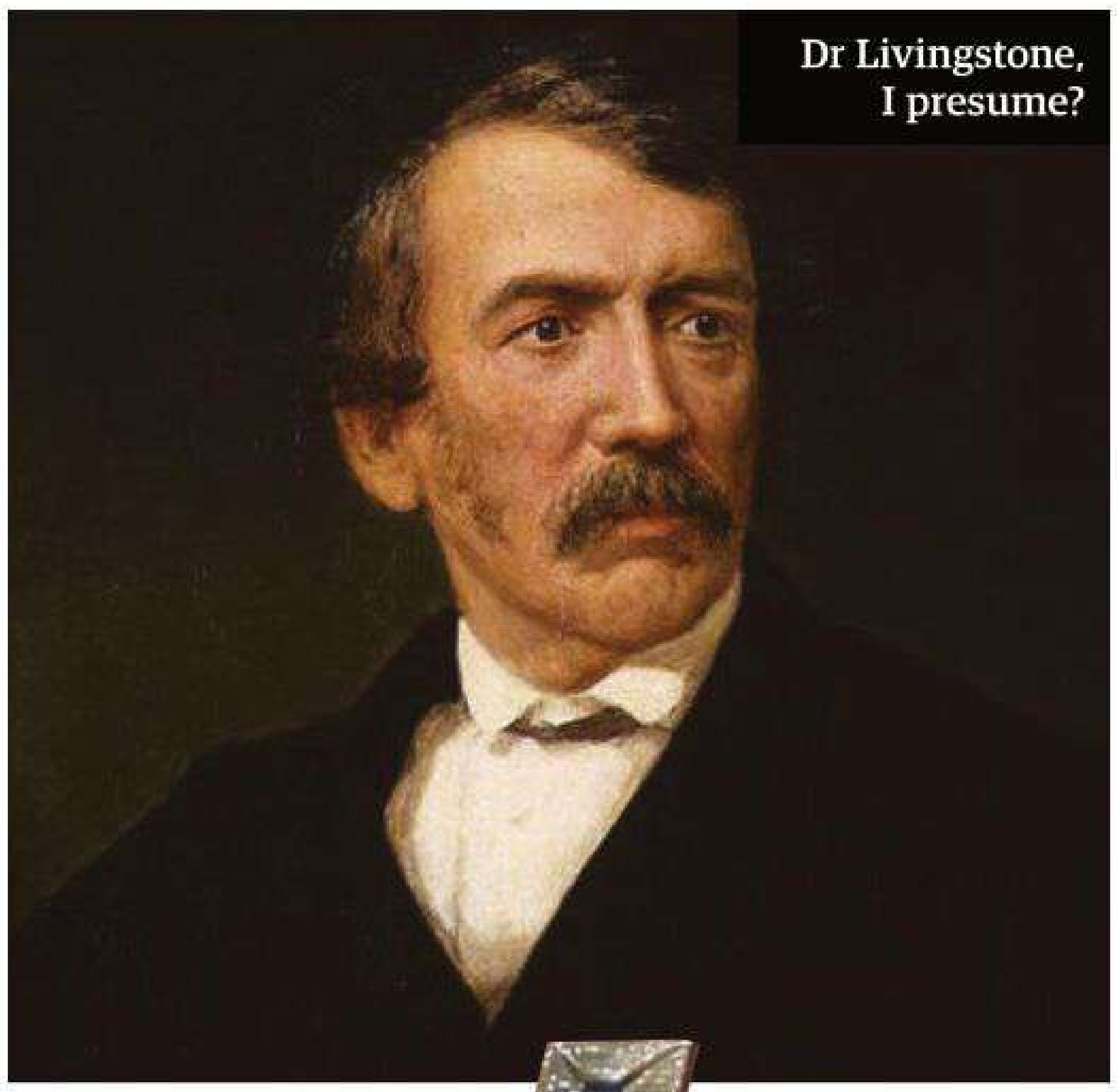
Gladstone, the "half-mad firebrand", as Victoria dubbed him, preached his opinions about the mass slaughter of Zulus and rampant destruction of their homes. Victoria was outraged but the public sided with Gladstone and, much to the queen's dismay, the power of the government switched hands once more. Liberal leader or not, all of Europe's attention was firmly fixed on Africa as nations began a scramble to establish colonies there. In amongst this mad rush to establish new territory by European powers, it was arguably one man's actions that would determine the ultimate fate of Victoria's empire.

Led by Muhammad Ahmed, revolution was tearing through the Sudan as tribes rose against their corrupt rulers. As this holy war drew uncomfortably close to the Suez Canal, Victoria urged Gladstone to utilise the British troops

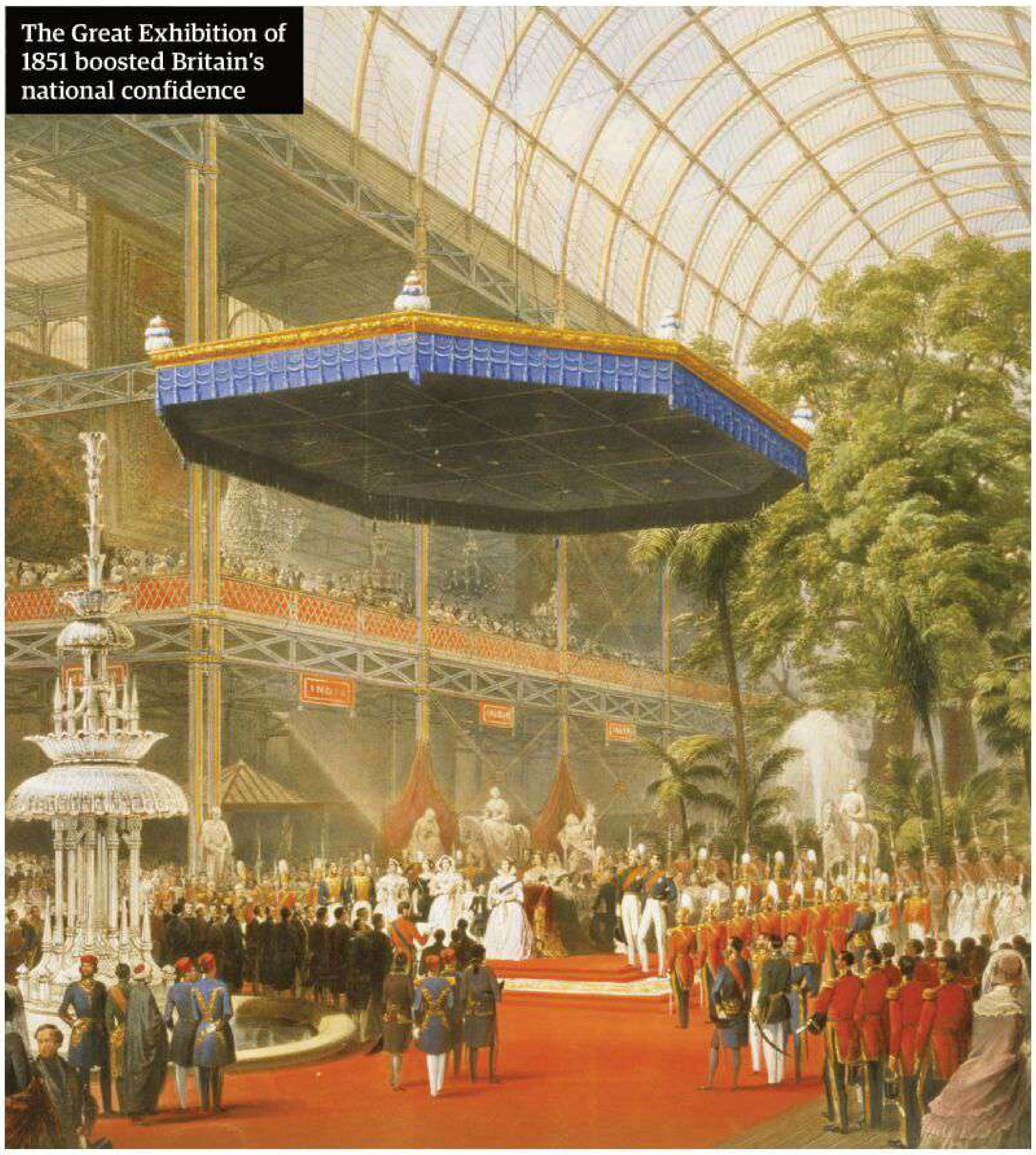
"They believed the British cause was to export not only trade but also gospel values of morality and justice"

stationed there to defend it. The liberal leader refused. In order to buy time he sent one man, General Charles Gordon, to secure the evacuation of loyal civilians and soldiers.

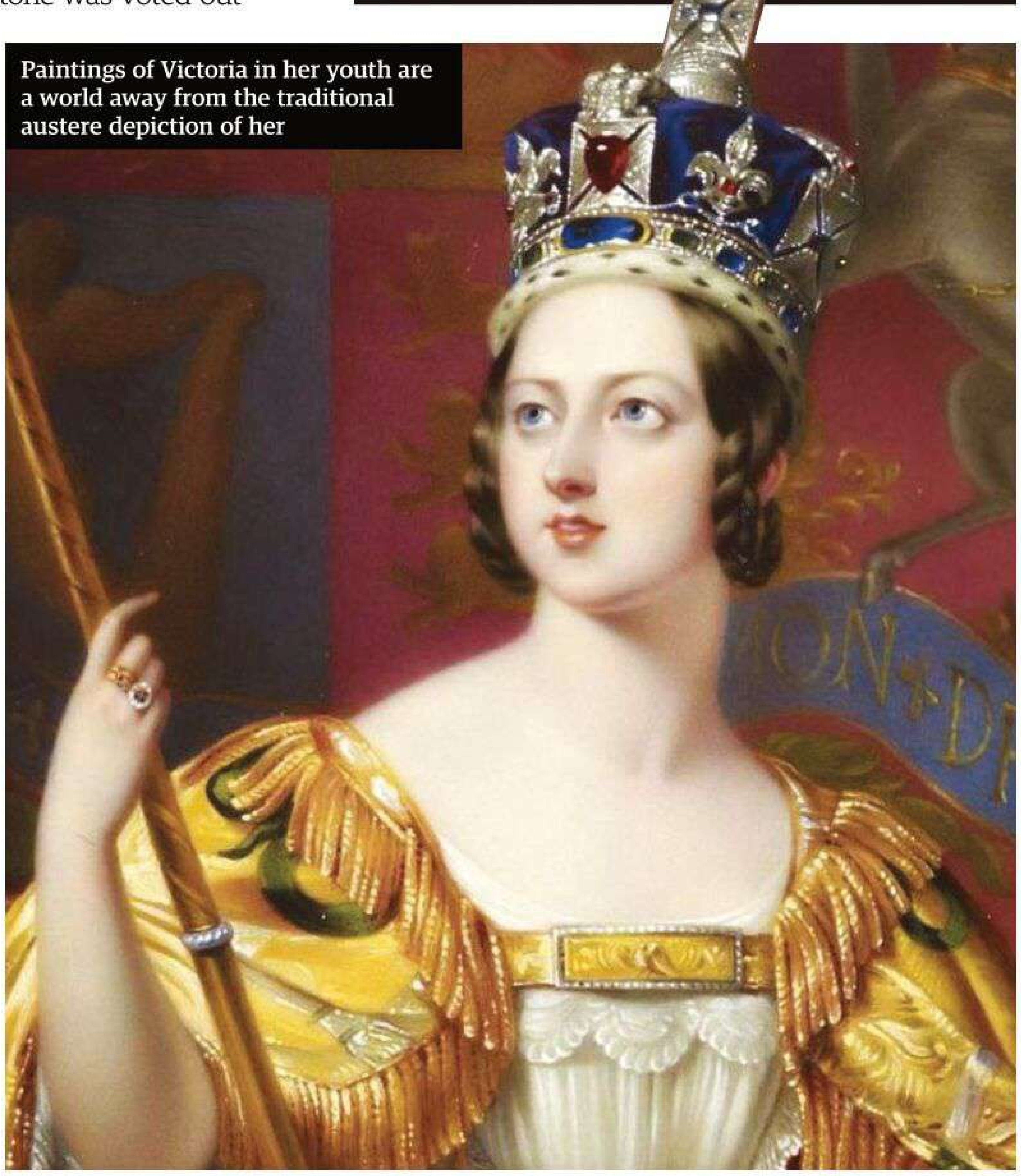
Like Livingstone, Gordon was a national hero. He was brave, dashing, popular and his decorated military career had painted him in the British public's eyes as a gleaming knight of old. Despite these qualities, Gordon was also wild and unpredictable. When he reached the Sudan he was horrified by the slavery rife in the region and decided to face the Mahdi in battle. With limited forces, Gordon soon found himself besieged in the city of Khartoum. His appeals for aid, to the adoring public's outrage, fell on deaf ears in the government. It took more than eight months of public fury to finally force Gladstone's hand, but it was too late – Gordon, the nation's hero of Christianity, was dead. In an instant the liberal vision was shattered, Gladstone was voted out



Dr Livingstone, I presume?



The Great Exhibition of 1851 boosted Britain's national confidence



Paintings of Victoria in her youth are a world away from the traditional austere depiction of her

Main competitors

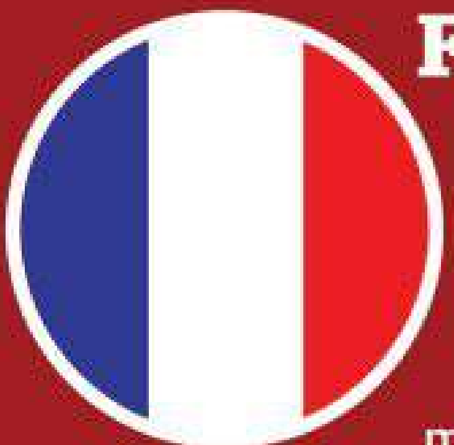
Three countries that were battling with Britain for territory

Russia

As England expanded its territory, so did Russia. For a hundred years Russia expanded east and south, narrowing the gap between the British and Russian empires in Central Asia. Britain soon became obsessed with protecting India, which was a rich source of goods and manpower. The competition for dominance of the states that separated them – Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet – became commonly known as The Great Game. The looming, but unlikely, threat of Russia's attack led Britain into largely unnecessary military involvement in Afghanistan and Tibet.

Germany

From 1850 onward, Germany began transforming from a rural nation to a heavily urban one. In the space of a decade Germany's navy grew massively and became the only one able to challenge the British. Although the German Empire of the late-19th century consisted of only a few small colonies, the newly unified state slowly moved toward colonial expansion in Asia and the Pacific. As Wilhelm II rose to power, his aggressive policies in achieving a 'place in the sun' similar to Britain was one of the factors that would lead to World War I.



France

Britain's age-old rival, France was still licking its wounds after the loss of most of its imperial colonies in the early part of the 19th century. However, French leaders began a mission to restore its prestige in 1850, seeking to claim land in North and West Africa as well as in Southeast Asia. After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War, it continued with zeal to expand its empire, acquiring land in China and all over Africa. Unlike most of its rivals, France would continue expanding after World War I and well into the 1930s.

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Eye-watering empire facts

458 million people ruled over

23% of the world's surface was ruled by Britain

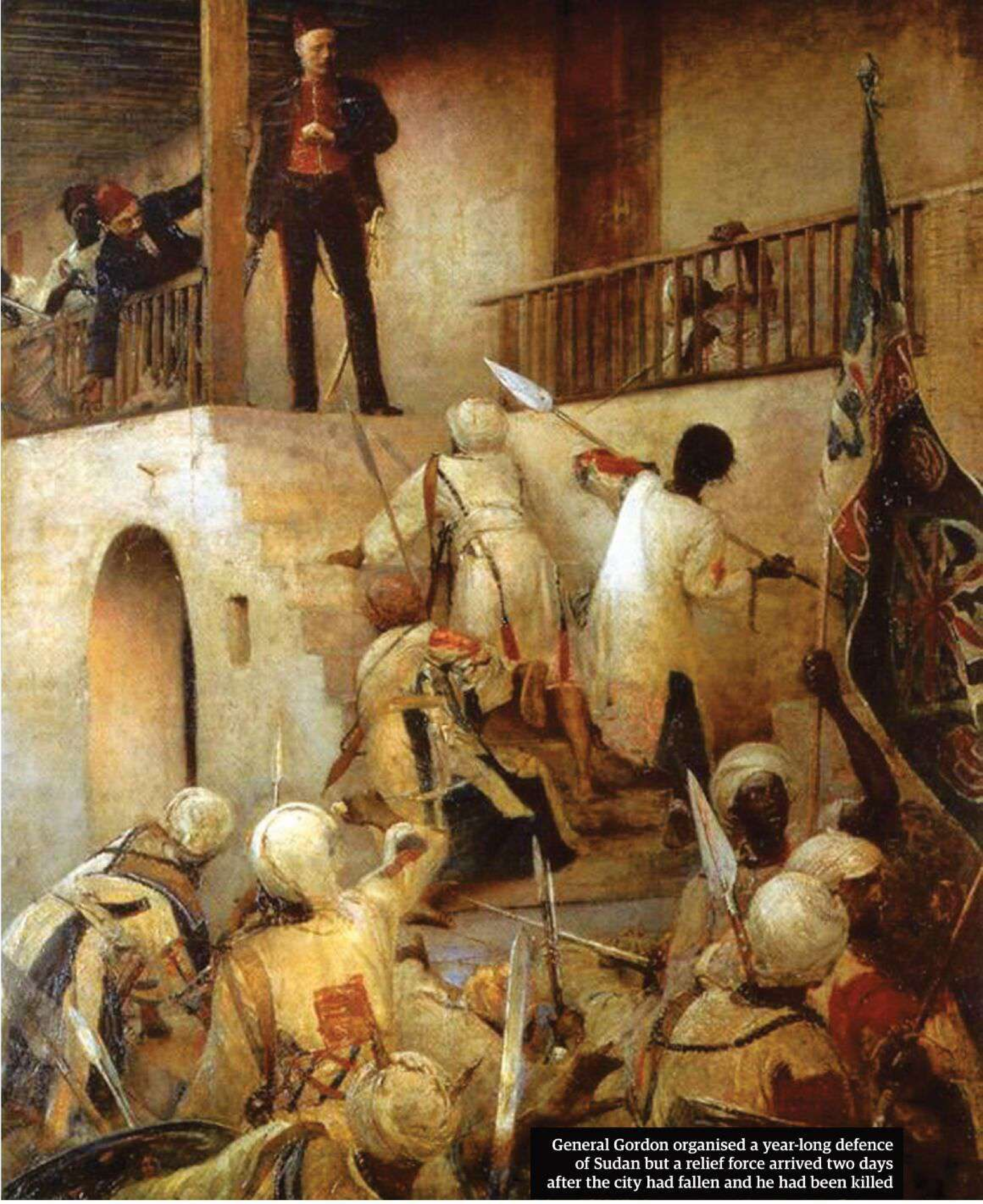
13.01 million square miles of land belonged to the empire

113 ships in the Royal Navy

63 years & 21 days the length of Victoria's reign

165,000 convicts sent to Australia

7,010,000 total goods shipped by Britain in one year (1881)



General Gordon organised a year-long defence of Sudan but a relief force arrived two days after the city had fallen and he had been killed

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> "The monarchy and government became united in the pursuit of one goal – the expansion of the empire"

and his moral influence departed with him. The renewed crusading spirit of British imperialism found its poster boy in a man who would lead the empire down a dark and dangerous path. Moving from England to Africa to work on a cotton farm, Cecil John Rhodes had become outrageously wealthy from the diamond rush, but he wanted more – the whole of Africa. Driven by greed and lust for power, Rhodes wished to create a British colony across Africa, not for the betterment of its people or to spread Christian values, but for profit and business.

Using the tenacity and cunning that had elevated him to success, Rhodes tricked and butchered his way across the continent with the British government backing him every bloody step of the way. Rhodes made it his purpose to make the world English and famously said, "If there be a God, I think that what he would like me to do is paint as much of the map of Africa British Red as possible." His path of colonial greed led Britain head-first into a conflict now known as the Boer Wars.

Gold had been found in Transvaal in northern South Africa, and Rhodes worried that this would prompt an alliance with the Germans, thus cutting off his route to the north of the continent. Rhodes planned an uprising to overthrow the Boer leaders, but it did not go as planned – far from the naked, spear-wielding foes he had previously conquered, the Boers had guns, and they fought back hard with skill and courage.

Outrage tore across Europe against what was seen as an unprovoked attack on an independent state, but not in Britain. Fully convinced of their noble mission, the British people believed the Boers to be vicious and uncompromising. More soldiers

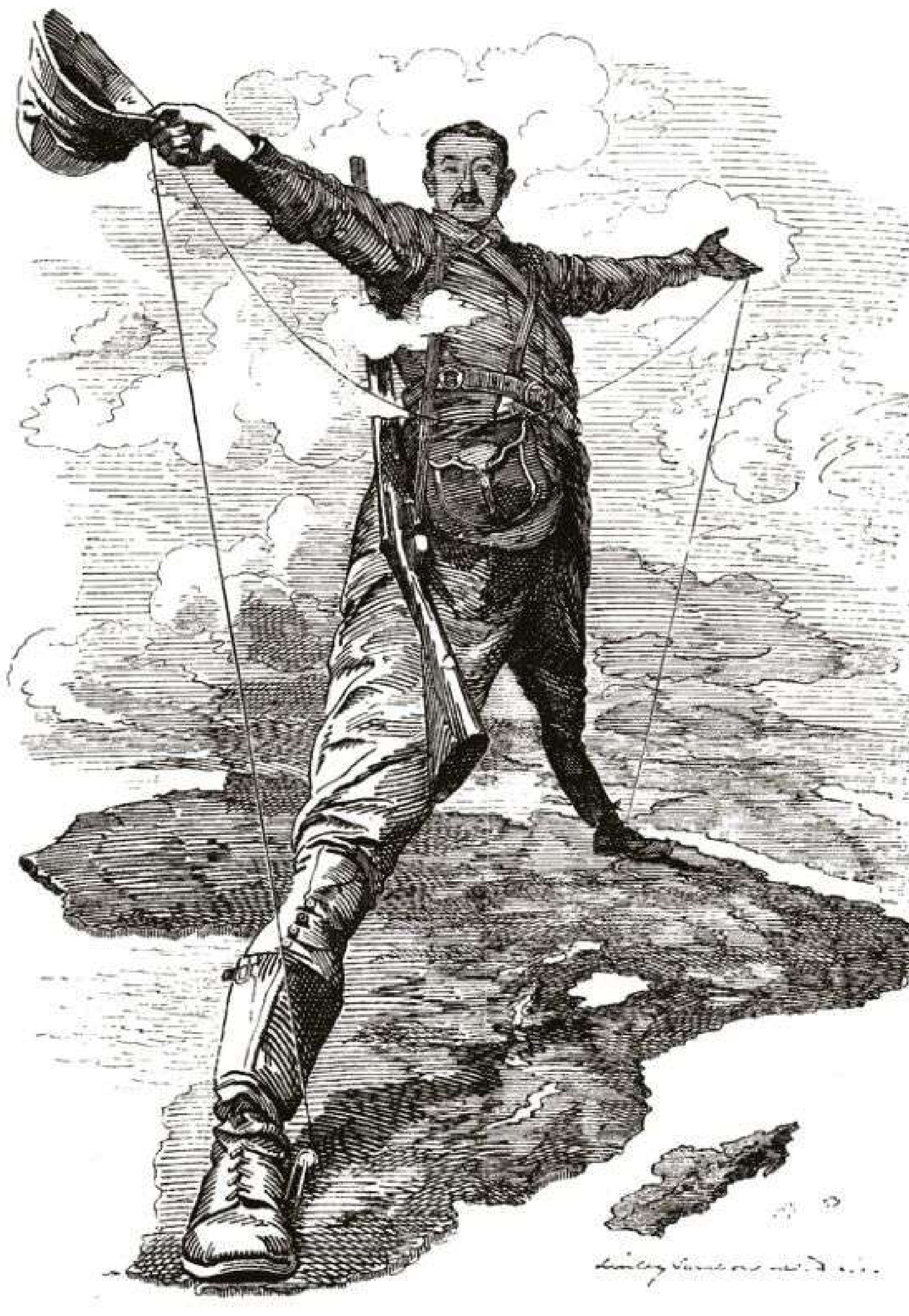
"As more British bodies piled up, British confidence in their own unconquerable might began to wane in Africa"

poured into the region, into a war they believed would be short and glorious, but as more British bodies piled up – Victoria's own grandson among them – British confidence began to wane.

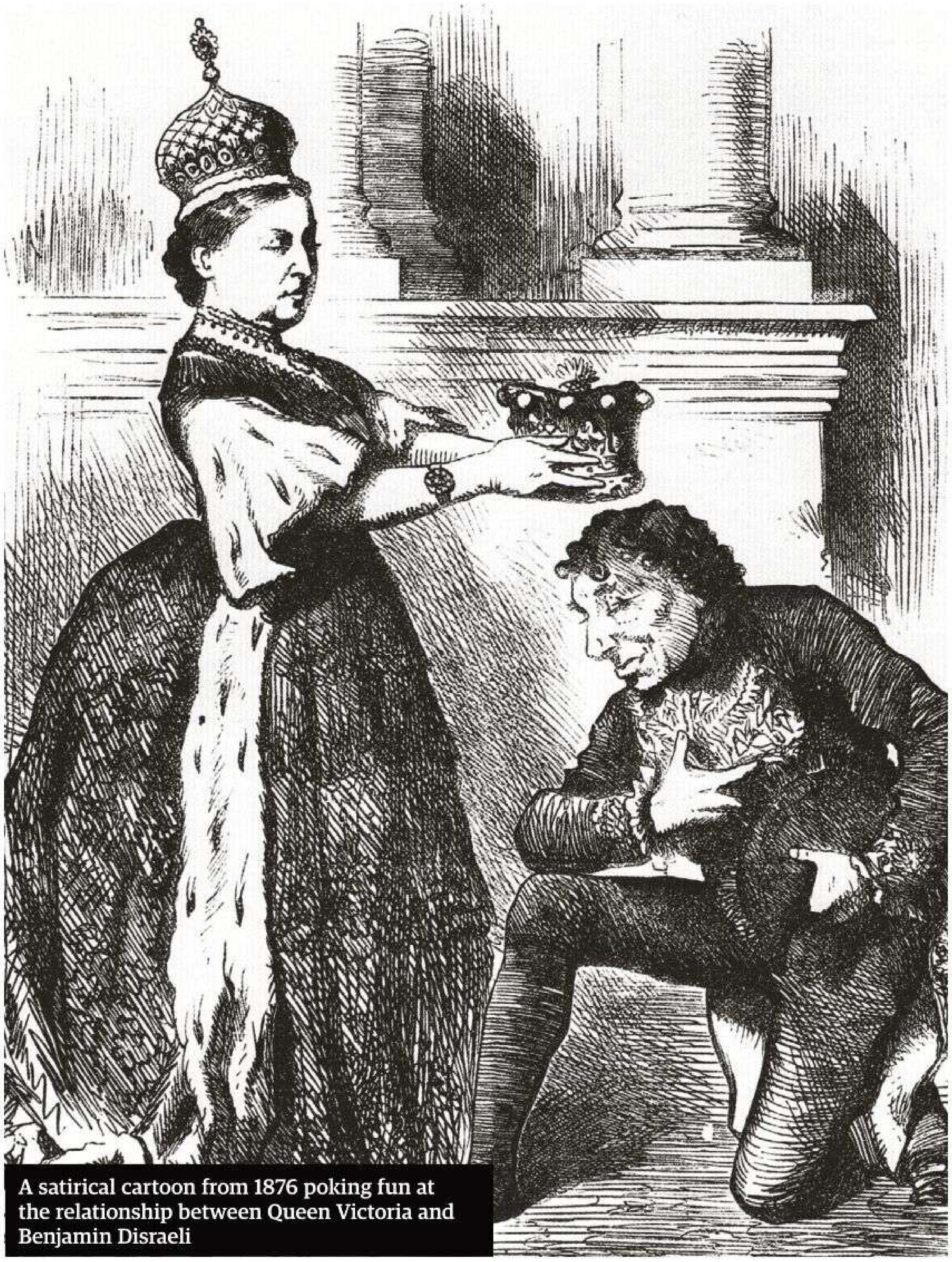
As British reinforcements continued to flood into the territory, the tide slowly began to turn. Rhodes had managed to squeeze a win from the jaws of defeat and the Boer territories became British colonies. The empire had grown, but at a cost. Rhodes' controversial actions during the war – including forming what would come to be known as the first concentration camps – had been a step too far for the British public.

What had begun as a noble quest of Christianity had transformed into a greedy and brutal scramble for power. When Rhodes died his merciless version of imperialism was buried with him in the dry African dirt.

When Victoria passed away she was finally rid of the mourning clothes she had worn for 40 years and was dressed entirely in white. Spring flowers were scattered around her body and her wedding veil was placed on her head as she prepared to reunite with the dearest love of her life. She was, however, leaving another behind; the empire she had mothered now stretched across the globe with large swathes still coloured in the pink of British rule. As the Sun set on the quiet room in which she lay in Osborne House, it was rising on the bustling spice markets of India, and soon the vast plains of British land in Africa would be bathed in warm golden light. Victoria had died, but the legacy she left behind continued to expand over the face of the planet. Even without their driver, the cogs of the British Empire whirred steadily on for another half century at least.



1892 caricature of Cecil Rhodes, after he announced plans for a telegraph line and railroad from Cape Town to Cairo



A satirical cartoon from 1876 poking fun at the relationship between Queen Victoria and Benjamin Disraeli

The 1851 Great Exhibition

Championed by Prince Albert, the 1851 Great Exhibition flaunted the empire's trade wins and industrial marvels

An international showcase of spectacular scale, the Great Exhibition displayed produce from around the world, from great woven textiles to the most intricate embellished golds. With over 6 million visitors – including Queen Victoria herself – the event was phenomenally successful.

Housed in a purpose-built giant glasshouse (which came to be nicknamed the Crystal Palace), the Exhibition was based on a French equivalent held several years previously, known as the Industrial Exposition of 1844. While the government was initially uninterested, the concept aroused public support as well as that of Prince Albert. After increasing pressure, the government were swayed and a competition was organised to design a building that could house such an event. The Crystal Palace design won and was soon erected in Hyde Park.

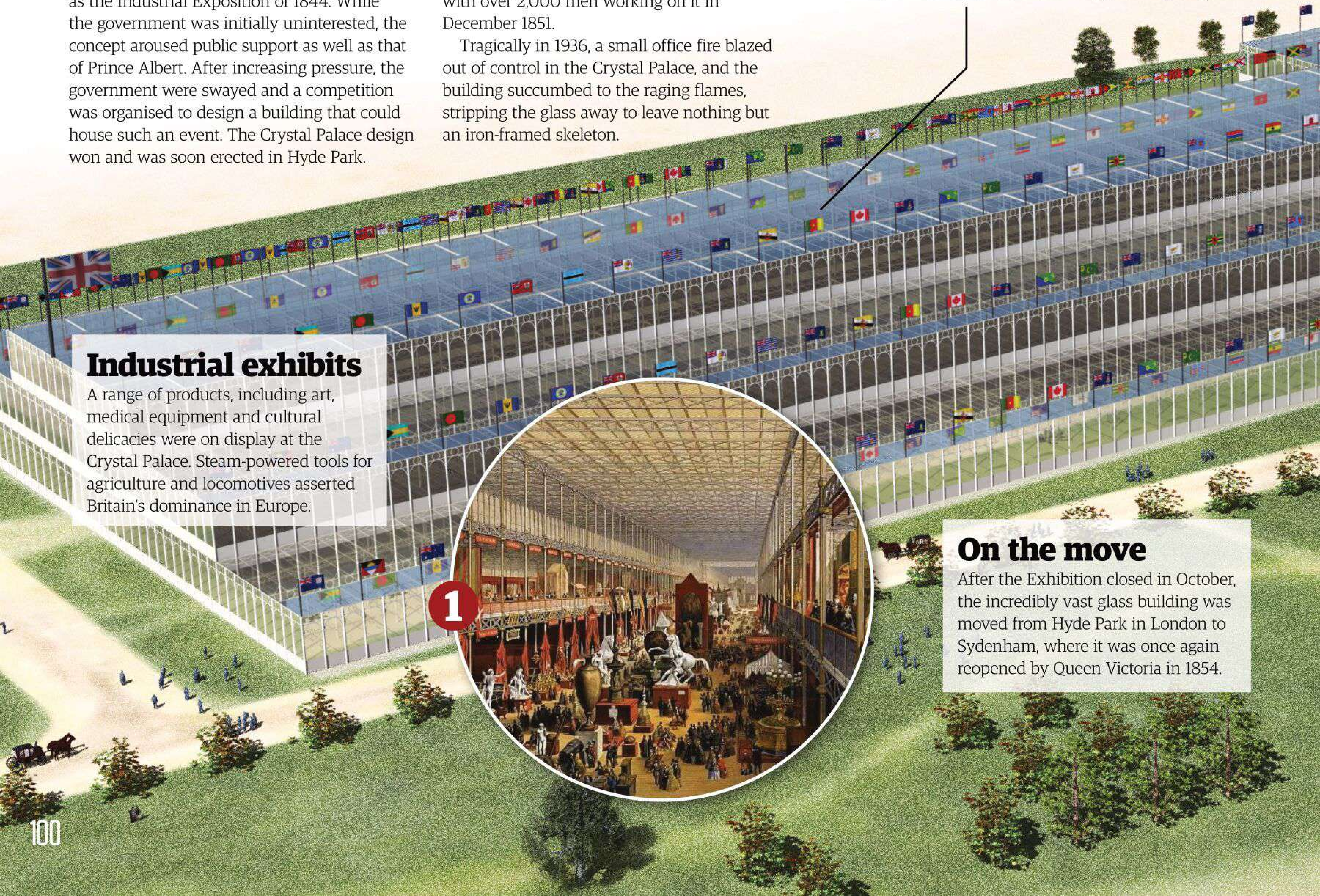
Taking less than a year to build, the Crystal Palace marked some serious advances in architecture and industry. Considered one of the first pre-fabricated buildings, the glass was created in advance, meaning it simply slotted into the iron skeleton when the sheets arrived.

The Exhibition was a roaring success for Britain, providing an unrivalled sense of national pride, as well as asserting Britain's dominance over the rest of the world. It was also an incredible employment opportunity, with over 2,000 men working on it in December 1851.

Tragically in 1936, a small office fire blazed out of control in the Crystal Palace, and the building succumbed to the raging flames, stripping the glass away to leave nothing but an iron-framed skeleton.

① International exhibits

Only around 50 per cent of the exhibits were from Britain, with the remainder brought in from around the world. India sent emeralds and rubies, as well as an ornate howdah and trappings for elephants (though the stuffed elephant that wore these at the exhibition was borrowed from a museum), while France sent tapestries and silks, as well as the machines that weaved the fabrics. Russia sent furs, Switzerland sent watches, and Chile sent a giant lump of gold.



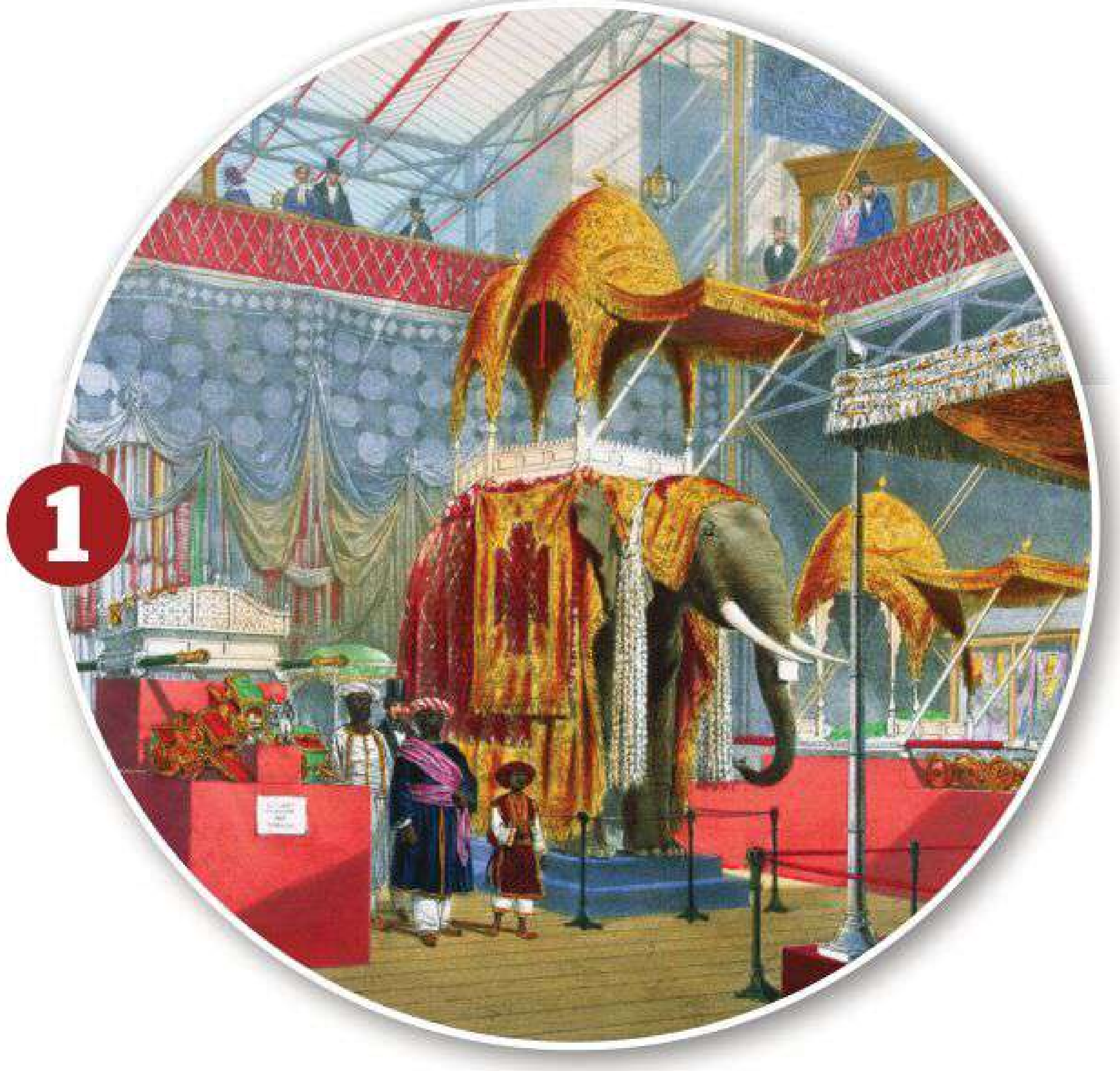
Industrial exhibits

A range of products, including art, medical equipment and cultural delicacies were on display at the Crystal Palace. Steam-powered tools for agriculture and locomotives asserted Britain's dominance in Europe.

On the move

After the Exhibition closed in October, the incredibly vast glass building was moved from Hyde Park in London to Sydenham, where it was once again reopened by Queen Victoria in 1854.

> "The Crystal Palace marked some serious advances in architecture and industry"



The first public loo

The Crystal Palace housed the first public toilets, known as waiting rooms and conveniences. If you were happy to spend a little cash, you'd get a private cubicle in which to relieve yourself. This is where the phrase "to spend a penny" came from.

❷ The meeting place

In the central nave of the Crystal Palace was a giant fountain made of pink glass. This area was known as the meeting area, providing a cool atmosphere, as well as a police desk for lost children and families. Visitors were able to buy refreshments here to keep them going.

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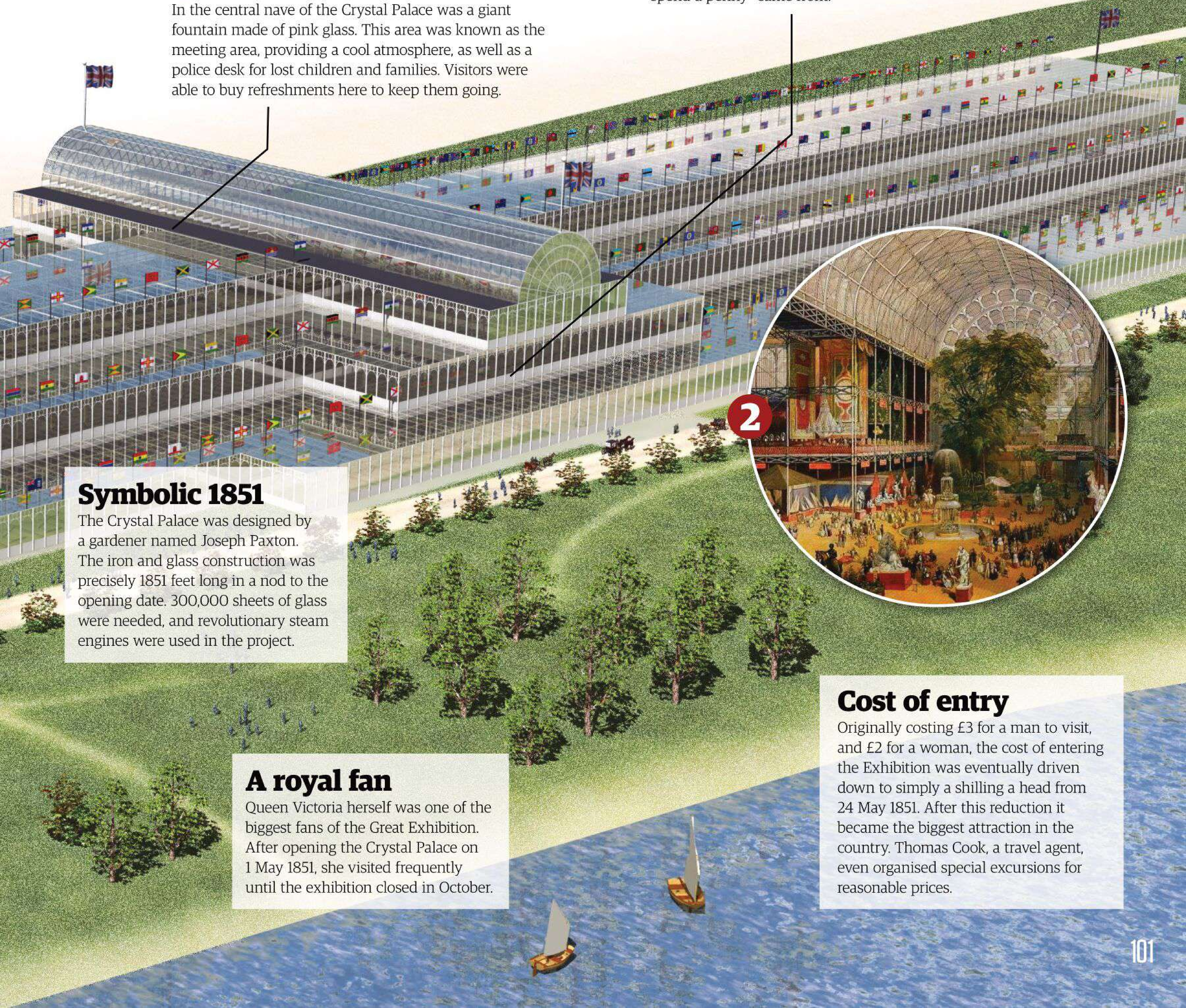


Symbolic 1851

The Crystal Palace was designed by a gardener named Joseph Paxton. The iron and glass construction was precisely 1851 feet long in a nod to the opening date. 300,000 sheets of glass were needed, and revolutionary steam engines were used in the project.

A royal fan

Queen Victoria herself was one of the biggest fans of the Great Exhibition. After opening the Crystal Palace on 1 May 1851, she visited frequently until the exhibition closed in October.

Cost of entry

Originally costing £3 for a man to visit, and £2 for a woman, the cost of entering the Exhibition was eventually driven down to simply a shilling a head from 24 May 1851. After this reduction it became the biggest attraction in the country. Thomas Cook, a travel agent, even organised special excursions for reasonable prices.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel

Father of British industry

One of the most influential engineers in the history of Britain, he designed numerous routes, structures and ships

The Industrial Revolution was a pivotal moment in the evolution of Britain into a world superpower. Taking place from 1760 to around 1840, it was a time of tremendous transition and upheaval, with the country becoming more productive and connected than ever before. It gave individuals with the relevant capacity and wherewithal the chance to showcase their talents. One such person was Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Born on 9 April 1806 in Portsmouth, he was the son of Sir Marc Isambard Brunel, himself an engineer of some renown. The beneficiary of an affluent upbringing, Marc was determined that Isambard receive a similarly good education. Having already imparted upon him a solid grounding in engineering principles, he sent him to a French academy to gain experience first hand, before returning to work as an assistant to his father.

He served as apprentice to the distinguished and renowned Swiss clockmaker, Abraham-Louis Breguet

It was shortly after this, in 1825, that he would take on his first role of real responsibility, serving as assistant engineer on a project to construct a tunnel underneath the River Thames. Despite being considerably younger than the majority of his colleagues, Isambard proved to be an energetic and efficient leader, driving the project forwards - often in the absence of his father, who was preoccupied with other issues and his own poor health. However, the work was dangerous, which Isambard discovered soon enough. After initially escaping a tunnel flooding with no loss of life, a much more serious incursion occurred on 12 January 1828, killing six and nearly fatally injuring Isambard. He was hospitalised and the project was postponed, but nonetheless it provided him with vital experience for his future career.

The following year, Isambard was drawn to Bristol by a competition to design the proposed Clifton Suspension Bridge, which was to run over the river Avon. His design was chosen, causing him to remark, "I have to say that of all the wonderful feats I have performed since I have been in this part of the world, I think yesterday I performed the most wonderful. I produced unanimity among 15 men who were all quarrelling about that most ticklish subject - taste." The project was interrupted and ultimately halted indefinitely by the effects of the Bristol Riots of 1831, but Brunel's skill had got him noticed.

In 1833, he was appointed chief engineer for the Bristol Railway project, and he immediately set to work. Over the next ten years, Brunel's work on what would become known as the Great Western Railway would come to dominate his professional life. While other railways were built in stages, from the beginning Brunel conceived the project as a whole, providing a vital link between Bristol and

A chain smoker, Brunel got through over 40 cigars a day. A half-smoked one was put on display at the Being Brunel museum

“His legacy lives on in the numerous landmarks and locations bearing his name”

ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL

1806-1859

Brief Bio

An ingenious mechanical mind and civil engineer, Brunel’s legacy lives on until today. He is renowned for his innovative designs and constructions that made him a highly influential figure in the Industrial Revolution. His mark on the British landscape survives to this day in dockyards, as well as on railroads and bridges.

How his son carried on the tradition

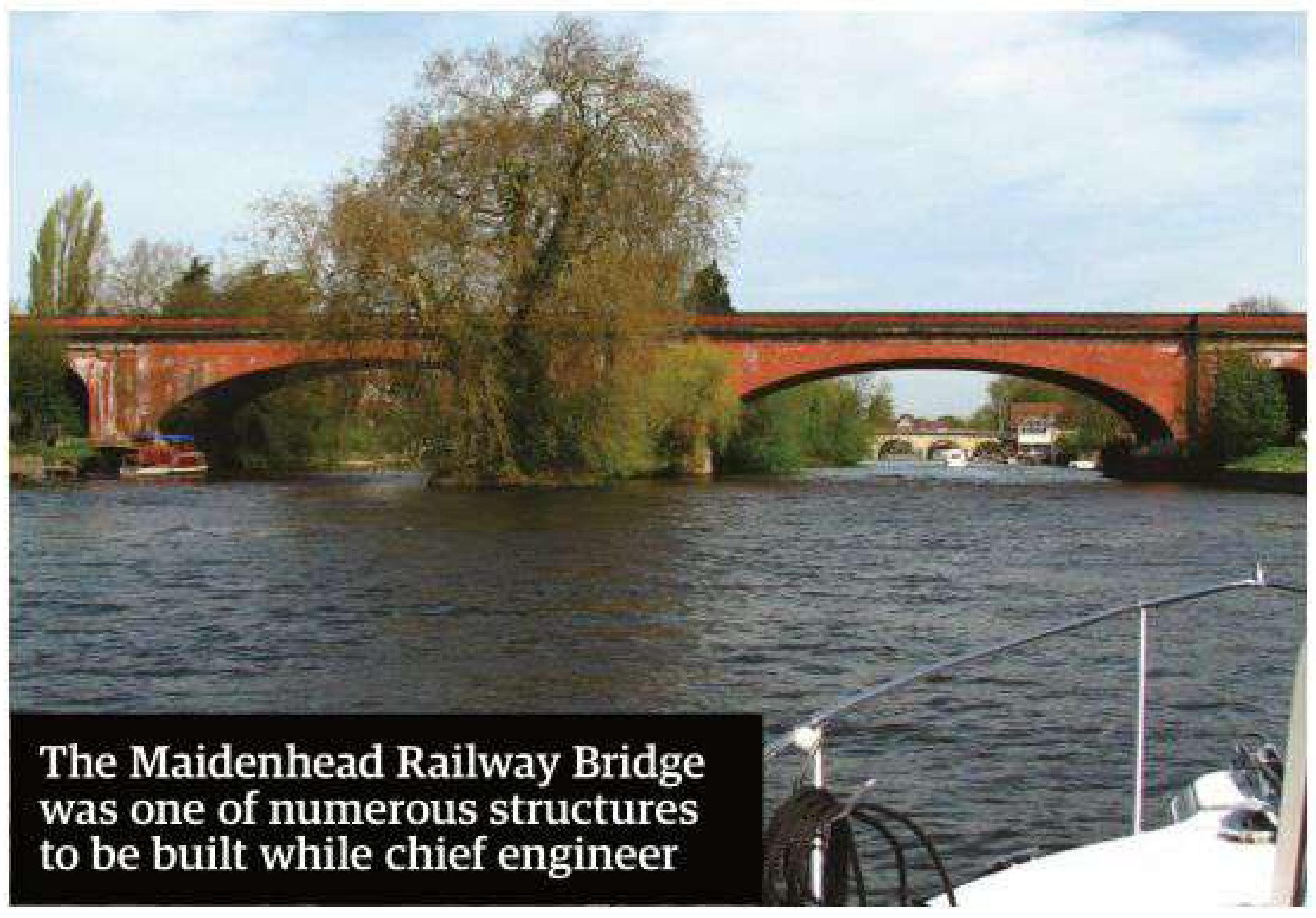
Much like how Isambard followed in the footsteps of his father in choosing engineering as a career path, his second son Henry Marc Brunel also mimicked his father's career choice.

He took an interest in his father's work from an early age, even accompanying him on occasion; he was present when construction on the Tamar Bridge began, and even acted as a runner during the launch of the Great Eastern.

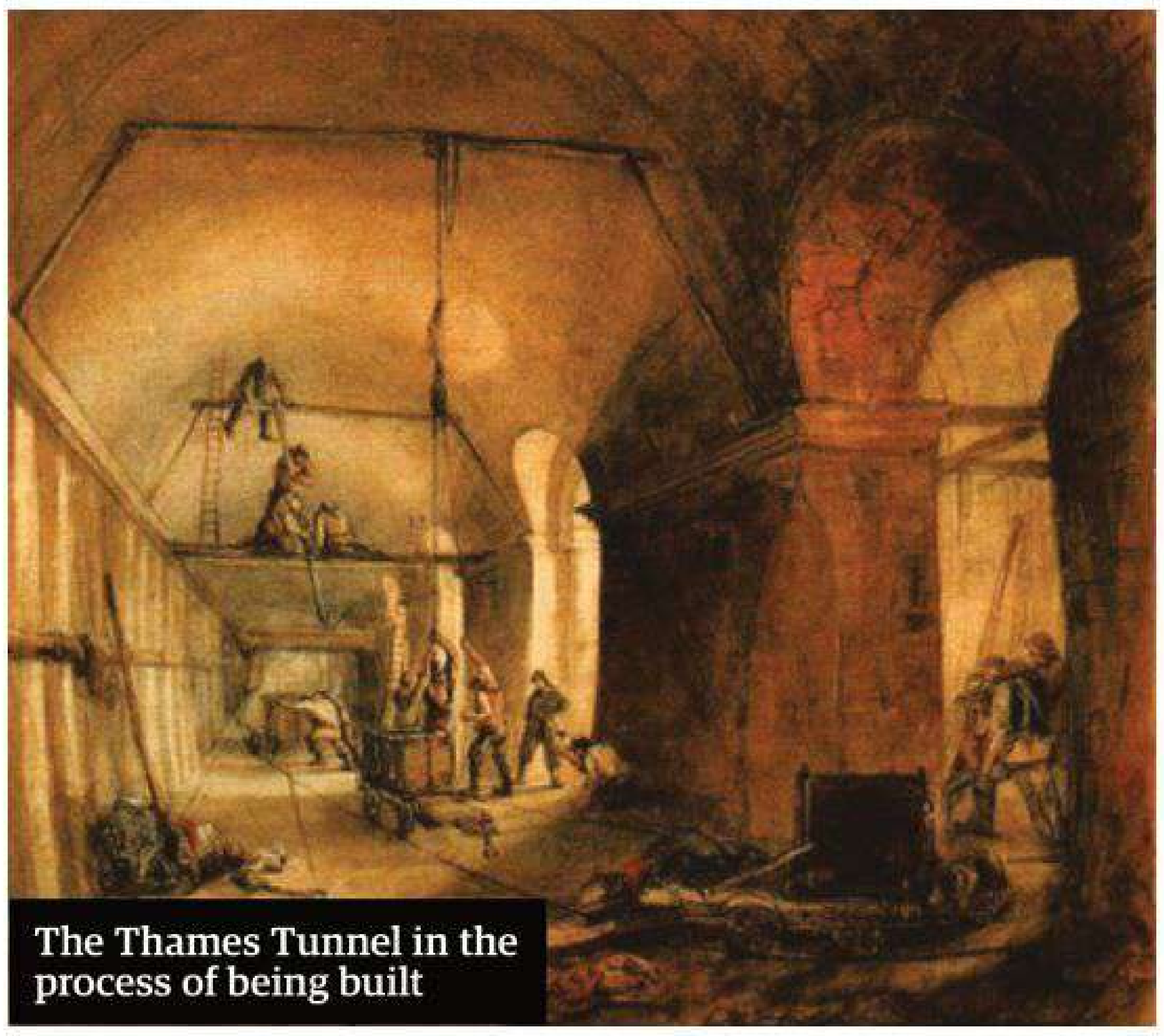
After attending private school at Harrow, he attended King's College London from 1859-61, after which he took on a number of engineering apprenticeships before moving into the field full-time.

Although his achievements never matched those of his father (in all fairness, how could they?), he still managed to leave his mark, teaming up with fellow engineer Sir John Wolfe-Barry on a number of projects, including the Blackfriars Railway Bridge, Barry docks in Wales and Creagan Bridge in Scotland, not to mention the missionary and hospital boat, the SS Chauncy Maples.

> "The SS Great Eastern was conceived as being able to make voyages to the likes of Australia and India and was unprecedented in its size"



The Maidenhead Railway Bridge was one of numerous structures to be built while chief engineer



The Thames Tunnel in the process of being built

London. Brunel completed the vast amount of the surveying himself, going against convention to choose a route through the Vale of White Horse (providing better access to Oxford, Gloucester and the north), connecting London to Reading via Paddington (for which he would design the station), and Bath to Bristol by way of the Avon Valley. After some opposition, an act of Parliament was passed in 1835, allowing the building work to commence.

Brunel was present throughout the construction process, notably insisting on the introduction of new 'broad gauge' railway lines, set on timber, which were deemed vital to increase speeds. The first section of the new track – from Paddington to Maidenhead – was opened on 4 June 1838, incorporating the Wharncliffe Viaduct, the first in a series of similarly impressive structures (viaducts at Hanwell and Chippenham would also stand out). The route was extended to Twyford in July 1839, then Reading in March 1840, through the Vale of White Horse to Wootton Basset by December 1840, down into Chippenham in May 1841 and finally on to Bristol in June. This last section of the route was delayed due to difficulties with the construction of the 1.75-mile long Box Tunnel, which in turn produced a knock-on effect with delays to the completion of the Bristol-Bath route.

Among the new landmarks on this route were the Bristol Temple Meads railway station, the bridge over the River Saltash near Plymouth and the tubular suspension and truss bridge over the Wye at Chepstow, built on the route connecting Swindon to Gloucester and South Wales.

Brunel's vision didn't stop at merely linking London to Bristol, though. He envisioned an interconnected travel network by which people could take the train from one end of the country to the other, before continuing across the Atlantic to New York. To this end, he needed ships that were capable of both covering the distance and transporting people in relative comfort.

His first attempt at this, the SS Great Western, was constructed in the Floating Harbour in the port

Defining moment

Thames Tunnel collapse
12 January 1828

While working on the Thames Tunnel, the 21-year-old Brunel almost dies when part of the tunnel is flooded. Six men lose their lives and Brunel suffers a badly injured leg and internal injuries, being saved only by prompt action from fellow engineer Richard Beamish. He is sent to Brighton to recuperate, but he doesn't recover until the spring. ork on the tunnel grinds to a standstill – the project isn't resumed until 1834, and remains unfinished until 1843.

Defining moment

Chief engineer of Great Western Railway
1833

Brunel is appointed chief engineer of the proposed Great Western Railway, intended to link London with Bristol. After an act of Parliament in 1835, work begins on the project, with Brunel taking a hands-on role. Along the way, a great many long-lasting bridges, viaducts, tunnels and other landmarks are constructed, such as the Box Tunnel, Paddington Station and the Hanwell and Chippenham viaducts. It arguably remains Brunel's most notable legacy, with much of his work remaining intact today.

Timeline

1806

Born

Isambard Kingdom Brunel is born in Portsmouth, the son of Sophia Kingdom and French-born engineer Marc Isambard Brunel, whose footsteps he will go on to follow.

9 April 1806

1820

Attends college in France

At the age of 14, Brunel is sent to France to study. He first enrols at the College of Caen in Normandy, before moving on to the Lycee Henri-Quatre in Paris. At 16, he returns to Britain.

1820

1829

Designs Clifton Suspension Bridge

While in Bristol, Brunel successfully designs what will go on to become the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Due to various delays, it won't be completed in his lifetime.

1829

1836

Marries Mary Elizabeth Horsley

Brunel marries Mary Elizabeth Horsley – the daughter of noted musician William Horsley – in Kensington Church, London. Their marriage is a happy one, and they go on to have three children together.

5 July 1836

1838

SS Great Western's maiden voyage

The biggest ship in the world at this time, the vessel sets off to Bristol for its maiden voyage to New York. Brunel is injured when a fire breaks out in the engine room.

31 March 1838

Brunel (second from right) preparing for the launch of the SS Great Eastern in November 1857; this first attempt failed

of Bristol, being completed and launched in 1837. Aside from a few early mishaps (including Brunel himself being injured during an engine-room fire), the Great Western successfully made its maiden voyage to New York, although its large size made frequent use of the Floating Harbour inconvenient, thus restricting it to the river near Avonmouth.

His next project, the ss Great Britain, proved to be similarly problematic. Brunel had been hired in 1832 to report on the deteriorating condition of Bristol's Floating Harbour, which he did, although the dock company that owned the Harbour delayed acting on his suggestions. This indecision came to a head upon the completion of the ss Great Britain in 1843, when it became clear that the ship was too wide to pass through the entrance lock. Brunel had anticipated early on that improvements to this area would have been made by this point, but his suggestions weren't acted on. Ultimately, masonry had to be removed from the side of the lock so the ship could get through, never to return again, as it was sold off after the Steamship Company was wound up in 1848.

> He was renowned for his energy and hard-working ethos. He would regularly work 18-hour days

In 1854, Brunel began to look even further afield. The SS Great Eastern was conceived as being able to make voyages to the likes of Australia and India, and was unprecedented in its size. It was 700 feet (210 metres) long and capable of carrying around 4,000 passengers. In his own words, he wanted "to make long voyages economically and speedily by steam, [which] required the vessel to be large enough to carry the coal for the entire voyage at least outwards and unless the facility for obtaining coal was very great at the out port – then for the return voyage also."

However, the construction process of the SS Great Eastern would prove to be an ordeal for Brunel. The project quickly ran over budget and overdue, and his relationship with shipbuilder John Scott Russell quickly became strained. While Brunel was meticulous and hands on, wanting to be involved at every step of the build, Russell was more laid back, giving his workers instructions and then leaving them to get on with it. As the shipyard was under Russell's control, Brunel relied on his co-operation. When it became clear that this wasn't to be as forthcoming as he would have liked, he grew frustrated. Further adding to his problems, the first attempt to launch the ship on 3 November 1857 failed. It was successfully launched in 1858, and made its maiden voyage to New York in 1860 – which Brunel wouldn't live to see. Although it never fulfilled its original purpose of travelling to Australia, the vessel found use in successfully lying transatlantic cables, and at the time was the largest ship ever built.

In addition to his work on travel infrastructure, Brunel worked in a number of other fields. He was responsible for the redesign and construction of various docks, such as Cardiff, Milford Haven and Monkwearmouth, and designed prefabricated hospitals to be shipped out to the Crimean War. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1830, and married Mary Elizabeth Horsley in 1836, with whom he had three children: Isambard Brunel Junior, Henry Marc and Florence Mary.

Brunel suffered a stroke in 1859, and died ten days later on 15 September, aged 53. He was buried close to his father in the Kensal Green Cemetery in London. His legacy lives on, not only in the numerous landmarks and locations bearing his name, but also in the travel network that he left behind. A large proportion of the rail routes and bridges in the South West were a result of Brunel's drive to improve the country's infrastructure; in doing so, he became a vital player in the journey of the British Empire in the years to come.

The SS Great Eastern never completed its initial aim of reaching Australia

Defining moment

SS Great Eastern transatlantic maiden voyage 17 June 1860

Of all the projects he worked on, the SS Great Eastern proved to be the most trying. Going over budget and overdue, it quickly became an ordeal, with Brunel frequently clashing with shipbuilder John Scott Russell making matters worse. After a number of mishaps (the first launch in 1857 failed, and the maiden voyage to Weymouth in 1859 resulted in a boiler explosion that killed six), it made its maiden transatlantic voyage in 1860 to New York.

1841

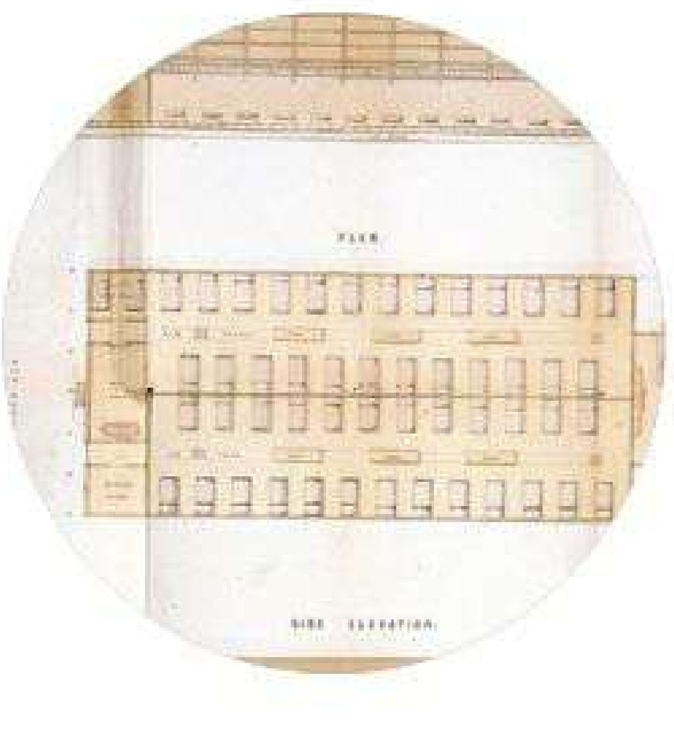
Great Western Railway completed
Eight years after being appointed chief engineer on the project, the full route of the Great Western Railway is finally completed. A towering achievement, it perhaps remains his finest legacy.
June 1841

1843

ss Great Britain floated out
Weighing 3,018 tons and measuring 322 feet long, the ss Great Britain is floated out into Bristol City Docks – where it waits for 18 months until the dock is widened enough for it to leave.
19 July 1843

1848

Chartist crisis
During the events of the Chartist crisis in London, Brunel enrols as a special constable in Westminster, with extra numbers needed during the tumultuous activities that ensued.
May 1848



1855

Starts to build Renkioi Hospital
Brunel starts to design prefabricated hospital shelters to be stationed at Renkioi in the Dardanelles during the Crimean War. Careful attention is paid to heating, ventilation, drainage and sanitation.
February 1855

1859

Passes away
Ten days after suffering from a stroke, Brunel dies at the age of 53. Like his father, he is buried in the Kensal Green Cemetery in London.
15 September 1859

© Alamy

Britain becomes a superpower

A powerful phase of the Industrial Revolution heralded a new age of steel, railways and electricity, which allowed the British Empire to grow even further afield

The 19th century saw Britain's 'Imperial Century' of dominance flourish throughout the British Empire. And with new avenues of trade opening up all over the world, this heralded the start of an exciting new era in British industry, as factories and transport networks were revolutionised to met the demands of processing the raw materials traded from foreign lands and dispatching them to our ports for export as finished products. Rather than the rural patchwork of fields and farms that her grandfather had ruled over, Queen Victoria's Britain was a booming industrial centre.

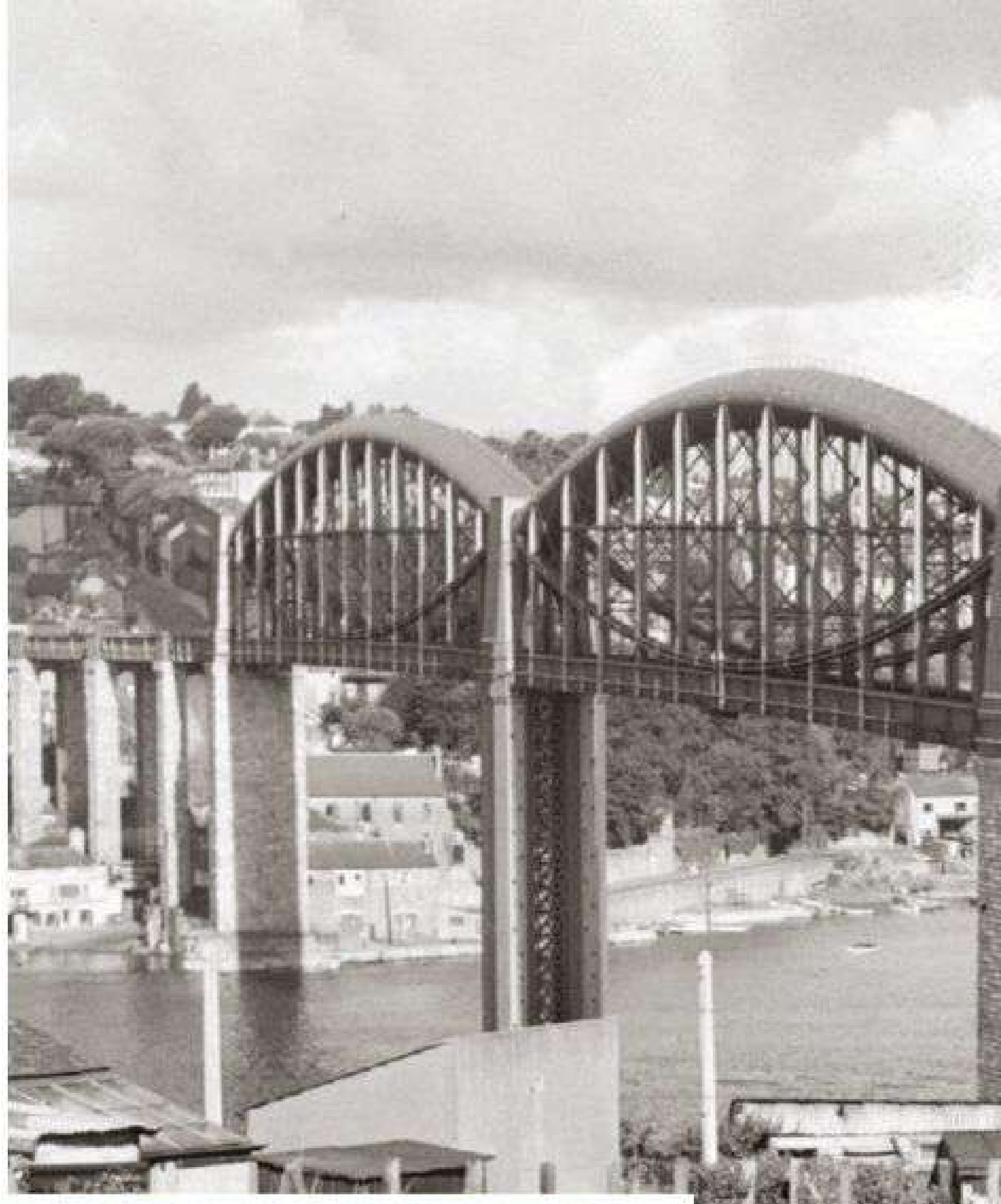
The invention of the spinning machine had revolutionised textile production, and cotton mills now littered the country. The invention of the steam engine had freed these machines from the limitations of water power, meaning factories could now be built anywhere, and the owners had chosen the cities. Workers swarmed in from the countryside in search of jobs, causing cities to grow at an unprecedented rate. Between 1801 and 1850, Manchester and Sheffield quadrupled in size.

With this new demand for steam power also came a greater demand for coal. Mines were made deeper, and production increased from 2.7 million tonnes in 1700 to 50 million in 1850. Then came the steam train, hauling coal around mines and delivering raw materials to factory doors. Britain was soaring miles above the rest of the world, and it seemed it could go no higher.

But a new revolution was dawning – a technological one. Developments in the field of metallurgy meant that materials like iron and steel could now be made at low cost and high efficiency. Railways started snaking around the country, and huge load-bearing bridges stretched spans previously deemed impossible. The shipbuilding industry boomed thanks to new materials and technologies that meant ships could now be built to endure the long, perilous journey across the Atlantic for trade, and for patrolling and defending the empire. By the end of Victoria's reign, Britain had also turned electric and could send coded messages anywhere in the world, expanding the empire's influence even further.

The introduction of Bessemer steel in the 1850s prompted economic growth to snowball as other industries developed

Broad gauge tracks being ripped up in Plymouth, after Parliament ruled in favour of the standard gauge



Iron, railways and Brunel's gauge war

Miles and miles of railway lines bridged the gap between city and country, as Britain was struck by railway mania

The first wave of the Industrial Revolution had seen the invention of a new method for smelting coal, and the coke pig iron it produced was used for making cast-iron goods like pots and kettles, and later as a building material. It revolutionised metallurgy, but it was a highly inefficient process that was impractical for use on a wide scale. However, in 1828 a Scottish inventor called James Beaumont Neilson patented a design for a hot blast technique that drastically reduced the amount of fuel required for the process. In turn, the cost of producing the wrought iron necessary for making things like train tracks fell, allowing for the proliferation of railways in the 1830s.

Although the first steam trains had been designed in the early 1800s – Trevithick's Puffing Devil finished in 1804 – they had mainly been used in coal mines and for transporting goods. The first public steam-hauled railway, the Stockton and Darlington, opened in 1825 and the first inter-city railway in the world was opened in 1830, connecting Liverpool and Manchester. Then, in an event that would change rail travel forever, the first section of the Great Western Railway was completed in the year after Victoria's accession.

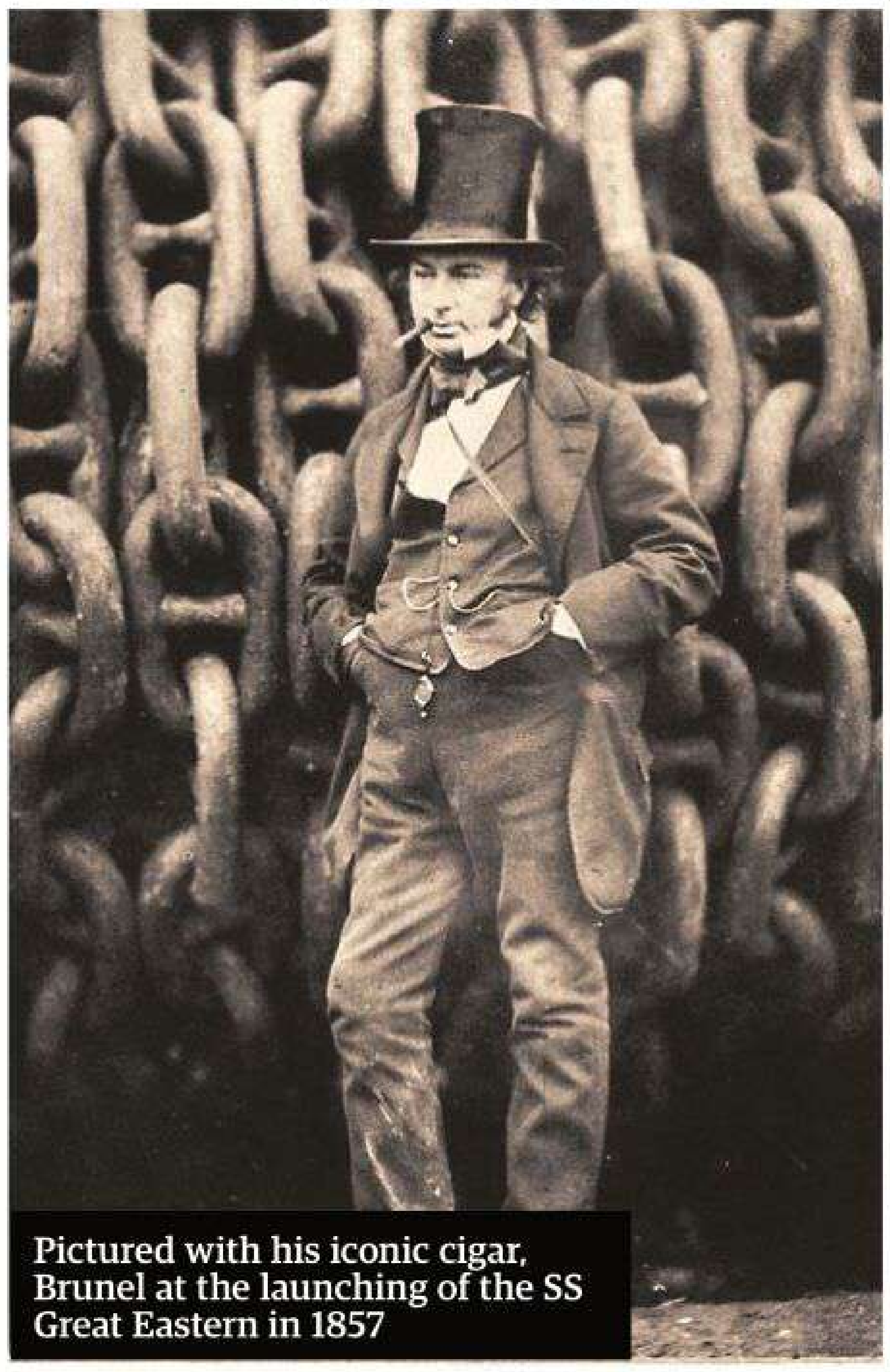
The project had been masterminded by merchants in Bristol who wanted to ensure that the city remained the second most important port in the country, and the chief one for American trade in the empire. They decided the way forward was to build a railway line between Bristol and London, one that would outperform those being built in the north.

The line was engineered by a young Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who had been an assistant engineer on the Thames Tunnel under his father Marc. It was by far his biggest project to date, and it was to be plagued by controversies. The most infamous was Brunel's decision to use a 7.25 feet (2.14 metres) track gauge, known as a broad gauge. He did this with the future of rail travel in mind, foreseeing that high-speed trains would need wider, lower carriages to reduce air resistance. However, the Birmingham and Gloucester railway had already been built with a standard gauge measurement of 4 feet 8.25 inches (1.44 metres). When the line would eventually be connected to the broad-gauge Bristol and Gloucester line, all passengers and goods travelling between the north and the south west would have to change trains half-way through their journey. This problem sparked the 'gauge war', which was eventually battled out in Parliament. In 1946, it ruled in favour of the standard gauge, declaring that all trains outside of the south west were to be built without Brunel's design. Over time, lines that had been made with a broad gauge would have to be converted. By 1892 it had disappeared completely.

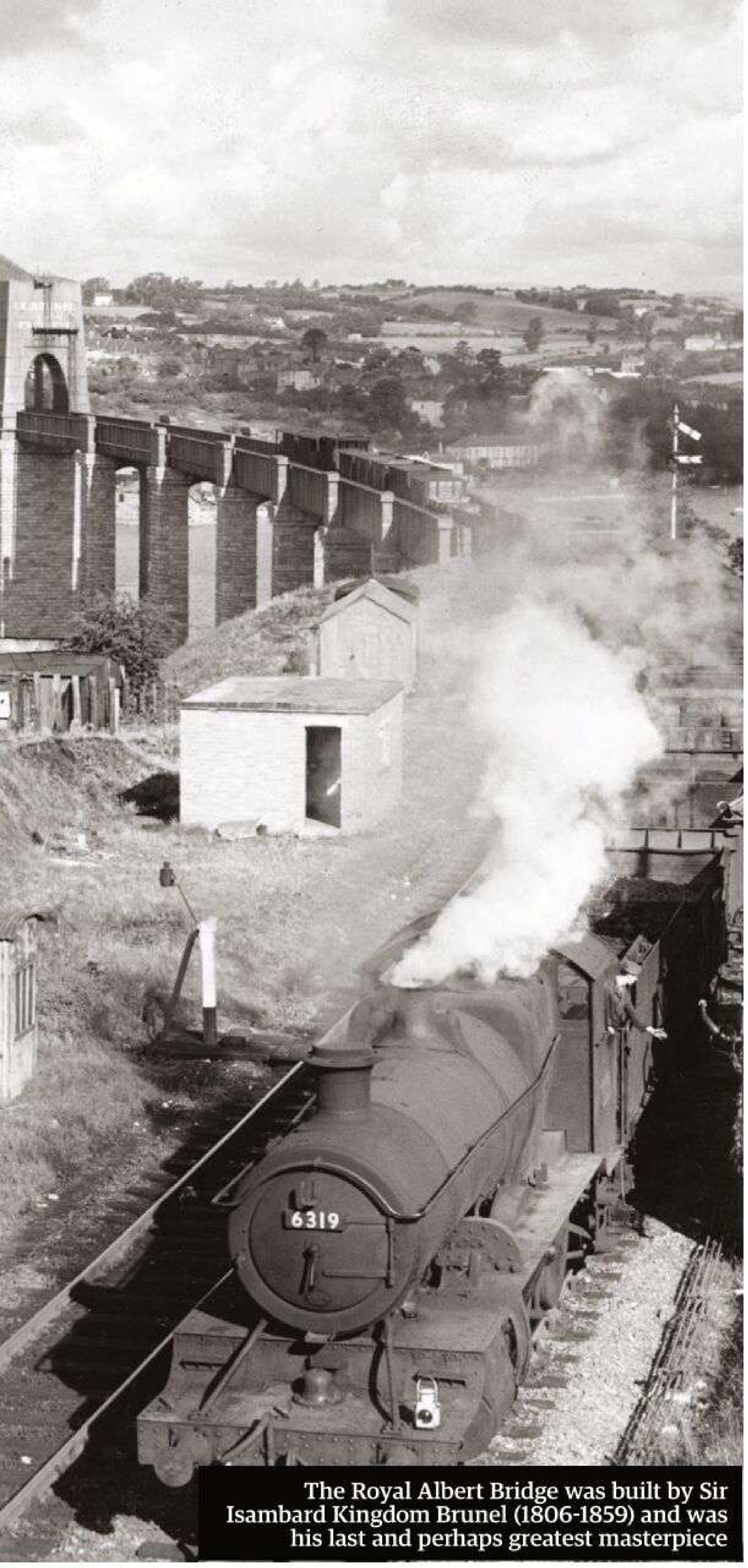
Despite its failure to revolutionise railway design, the Great Western Railway did revolutionise travel. It kick-started a new era of rail tourism. Upholstered seats, armrests and enclosed carriages soon became the norm, and cheap tickets were also offered, with excursion trains operating to popular destinations and events like the 1951 Great Exhibition. Railways were even built below ground, marking the birth of the London Underground.

By the end of the 19th century, fresh produce could be shipped across the country, while newspapers could be printed in London and whisked up to Edinburgh the same day.

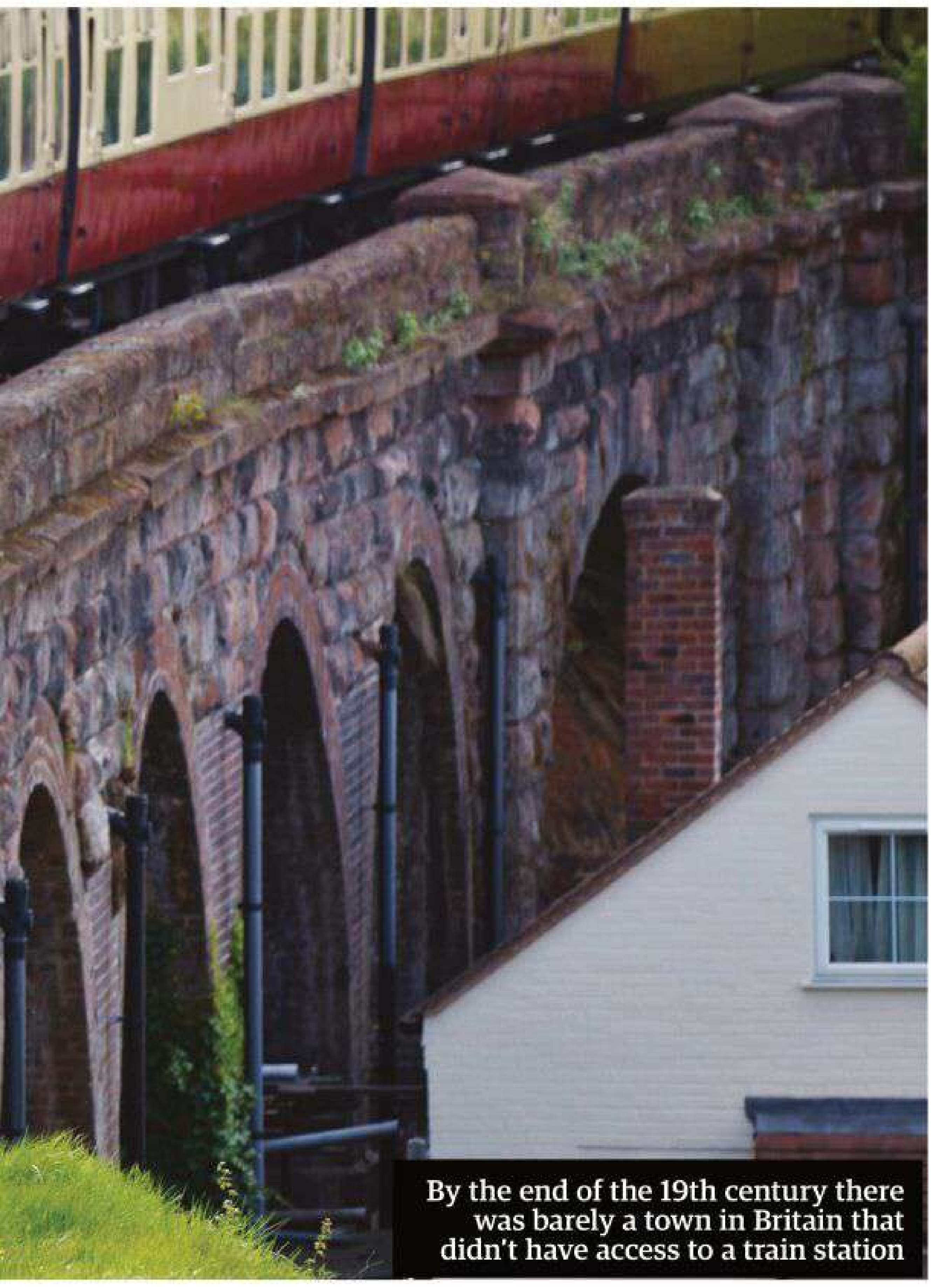
> Brunel predicated that high-speed trains of the future would need wider, lower carriages to reduce air resistance



Pictured with his iconic cigar, Brunel at the launching of the SS Great Eastern in 1857



The Royal Albert Bridge was built by Sir Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) and was his last and perhaps greatest masterpiece



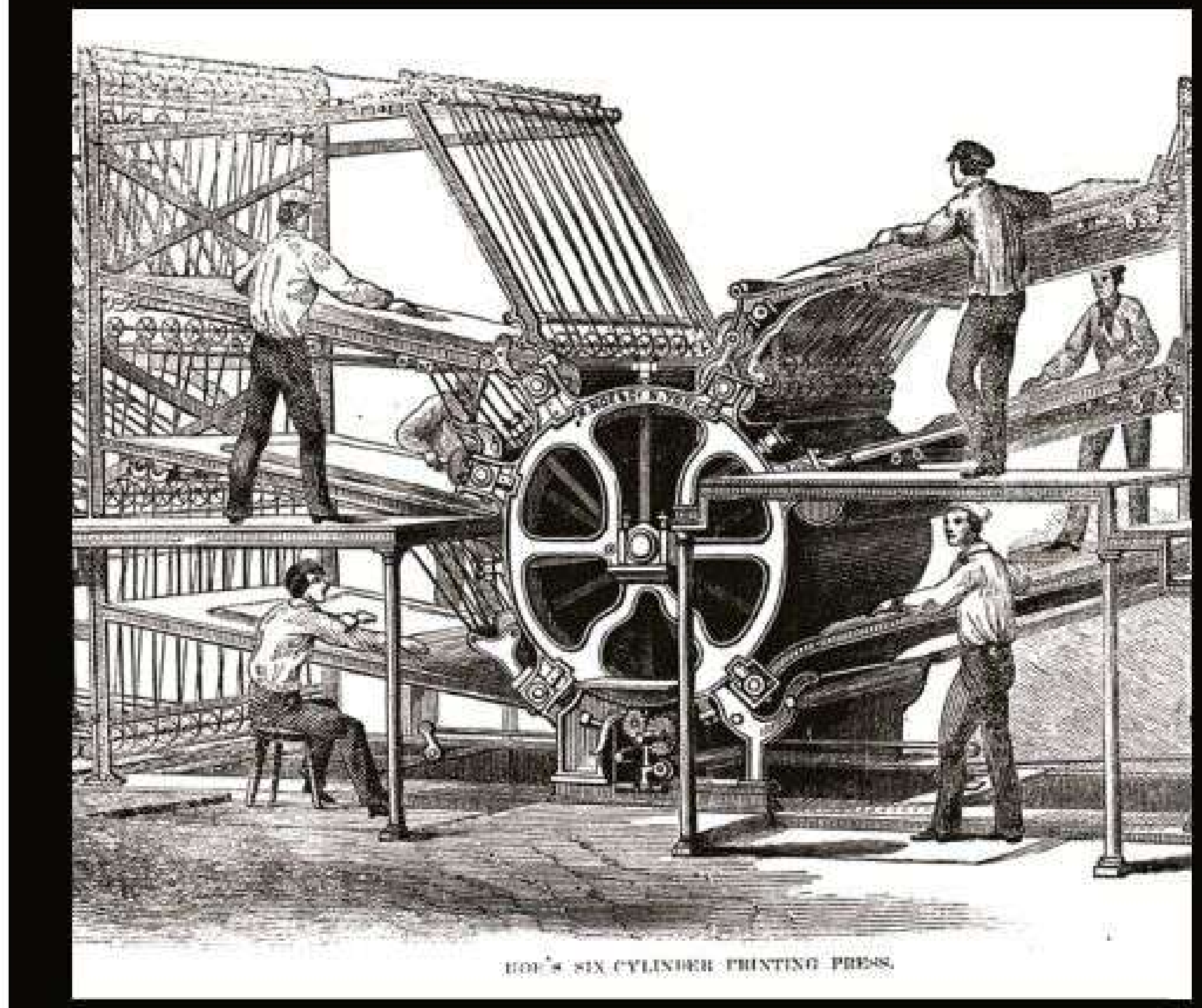
By the end of the 19th century there was barely a town in Britain that didn't have access to a train station

Everyday developments

With the innovations in iron, steam-power and textiles, as well as electricity and steel, productivity soared in many British industries

Media

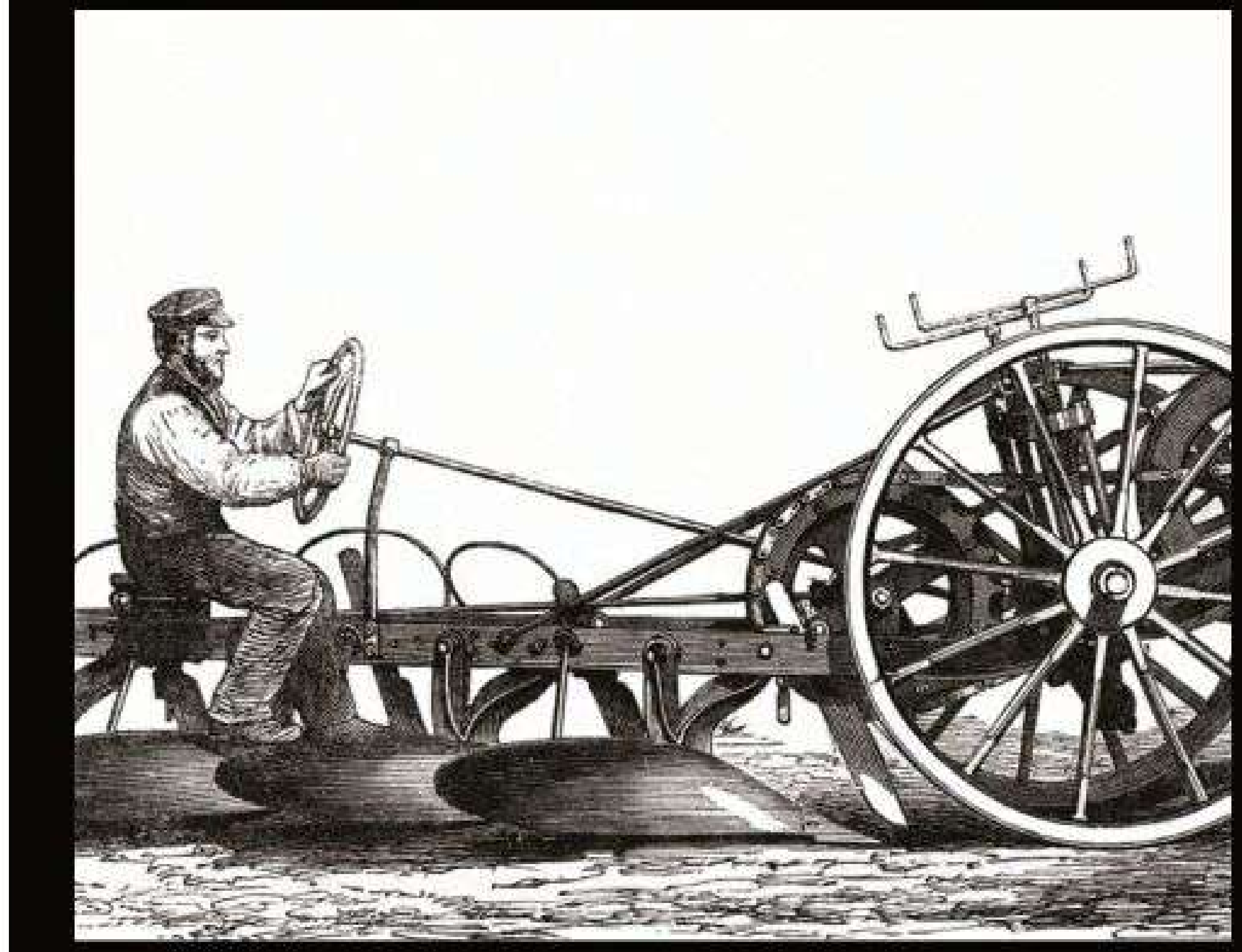
Not only did the Industrial Revolution see the mass production of textiles and metals, it also signalled the start of the mass media. The invention of the steam-powered rotary printing press in 1843 allowed printers to create millions of copies of a page in a single day. Combined with the development of the railways, newspapers could now be printed and transported to thousands of destinations around the country, making news more accessible than ever.


HOE'S SIX CYLINDER PRINTING PRESS.

The invention of the steam-powered printing press made news more accessible to all

Agriculture

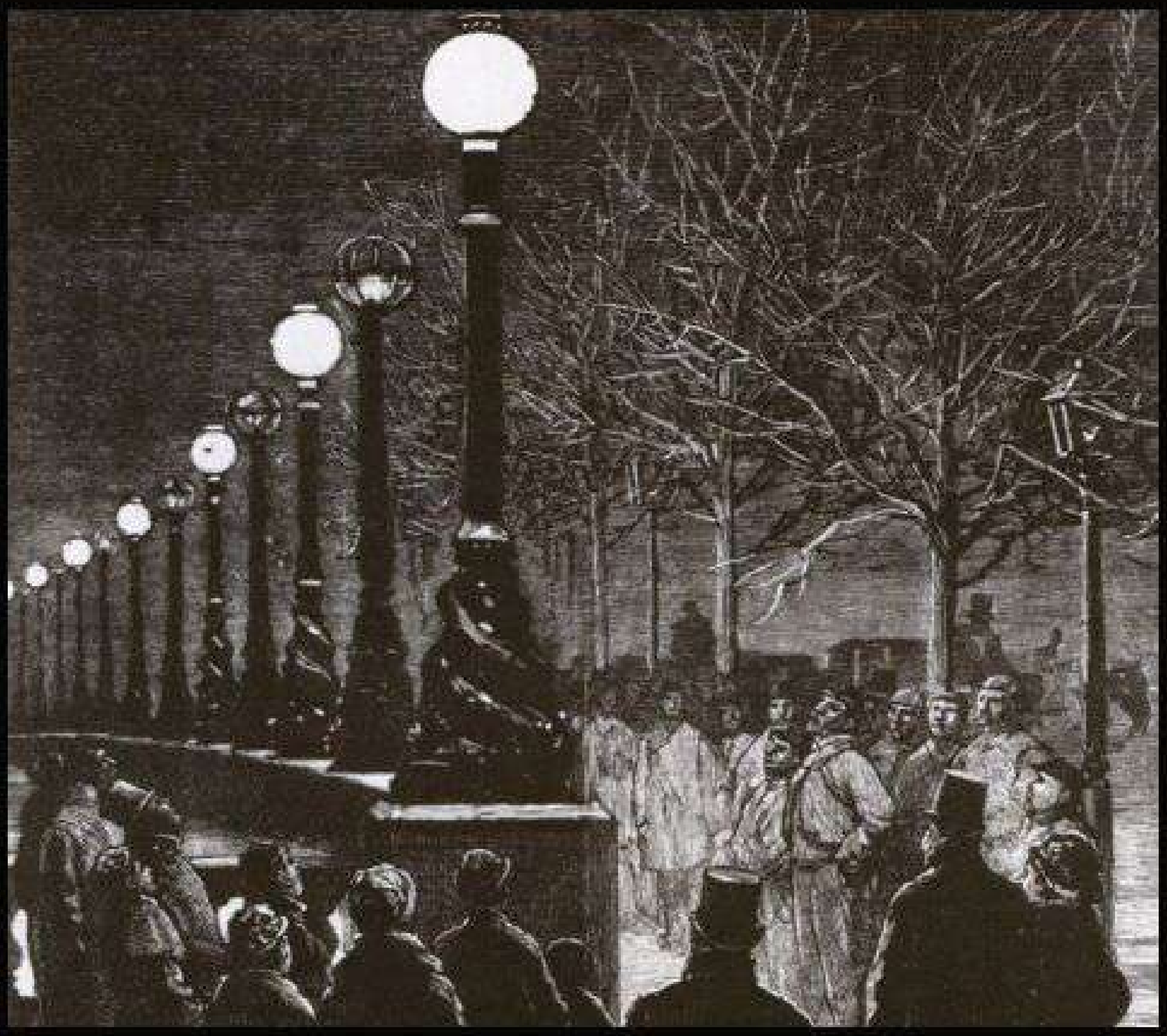
Although the Industrial Revolution saw a move away from agriculture, it remained an important part of the British economy. In the decade following Victoria's accession, agriculture flourished as new crops were planted and artificial fertilisers started being used. However, the invention of reliable refrigeration technology towards the end of the 19th century meant that cheap meat could be imported from overseas, causing a drop in British sales.



Agriculture flourished in the decade after Victoria's accession

Electrification

In 1891, the world's first modern power station was completed, supplying electricity across London. This new development led to the processes of the assembly line and mass production – both key facets of the Industrial Revolution. Not only did electricity speed up the manufacturing process, it also helped improve conditions in the factories. They may have taken a while to impact everyday life, but these inventions had life-changing implications in the home and workplace.



Faraday's discovery lit homes and streets all over Britain, improving living and working conditions

Automobile

The world's first automobile was first driven in 1885, and patented by Karl Benz in Germany, 1886. Two years later, he began to sell his vehicles, making them the first commercially available cars. In the USA, Henry Ford took advantage of the new assembly line process to run his own car manufacturing business.

In Britain, Herbert Austin founded Wolseley Motors Limited, which was the UK's largest car manufacturer until Ford opened its doors in 1913.

Wolseley Motors Limited was the UK's largest car manufacturer until 1913

> "The invention of the steam-powered rotary printing press in 1843 allowed printers to create millions of copies of a page in a single day"

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Steel and shipbuilding

Henry Bessemer's method for making steel transformed Britain's construction industry

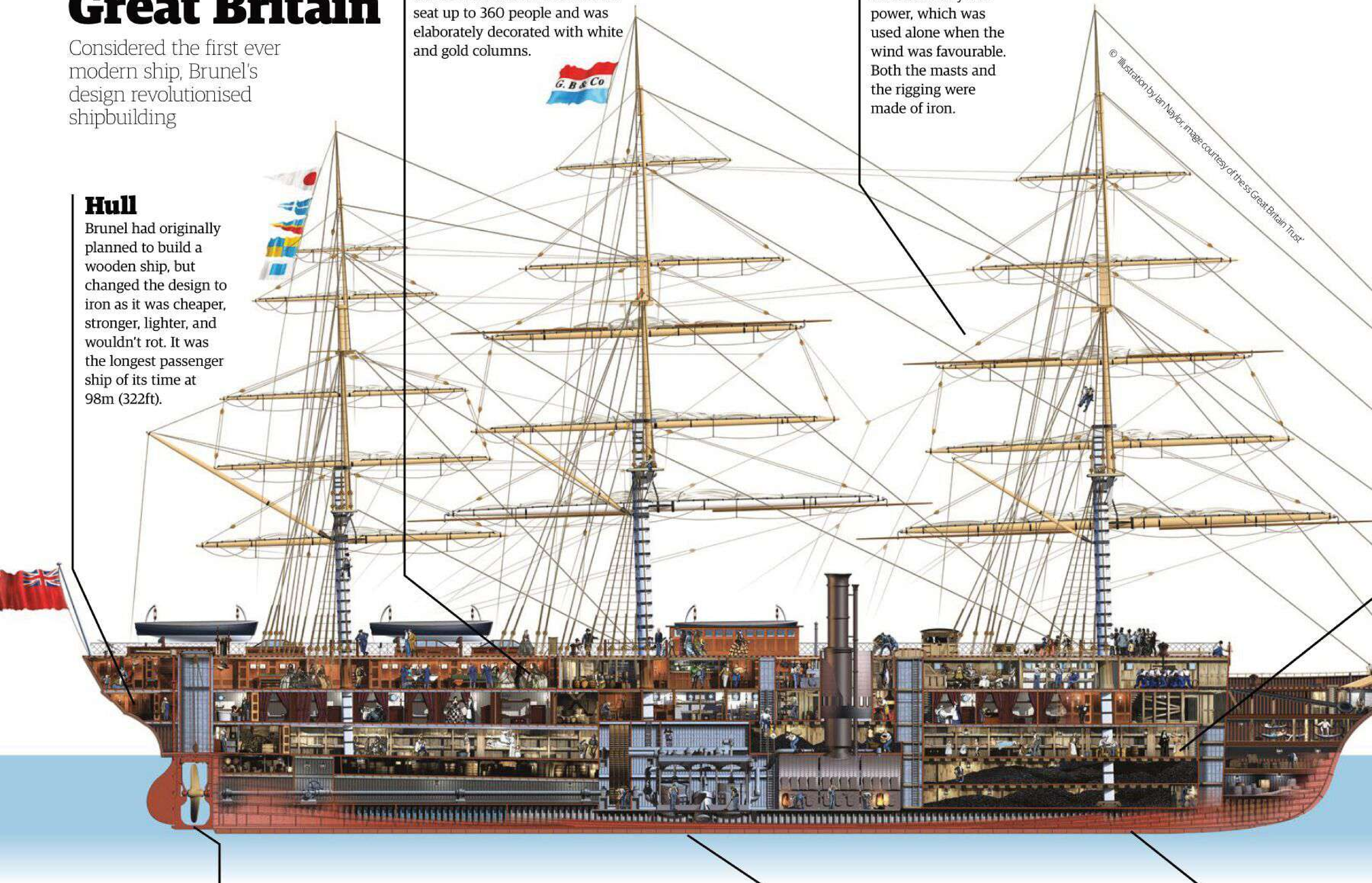
Although an improvement on the earlier wooden railway lines, wrought iron was not strong enough to support the heavier locomotives. It was possible to produce low-quality puddled steel, but the process was difficult to control and quality varied. To produce higher quality steel involved a long and costly process. That was until 1856, when Henry Bessemer, an English inventor, patented a design for the first inexpensive process for the mass production of steel. The key principle was the removal of impurities from iron by oxidation, with air being blown through the molten iron. The oxidation also raised the temperature of the iron mass and kept it molten.

With the introduction of the Bessemer process, steel production boomed during the 1860s as railways could finally be made from steel at a competitive cost. Steel rails lasted over ten times longer than the iron rails used previously, and allowed the use of more powerful locomotives that could pull longer trains and longer railcars. Suddenly the productivity of the railroads rocketed. Rail became the dominant form of transport throughout the industrialised world.

With its advanced industrial technologies, Britain was leading the international trade market. The British government knew that in order to operate and maintain this successful trade empire, they would have to ensure that their ship services were also fast, reliable and regular. Earlier developments in shipbuilding, like the invention of the screw propeller in 1835, had improved speed and durability, and the invention of the surface condenser allowed boilers to run on seawater

Inside SS Great Britain

Considered the first ever modern ship, Brunel's design revolutionised shipbuilding



Dining saloon
The dining room was believed to be the finest of its time. It could seat up to 360 people and was elaborately decorated with white and gold columns.

Sails
SS Great Britain also had secondary sail power, which was used alone when the wind was favourable. Both the masts and the rigging were made of iron.

© Illustration by Ian Naylor, image courtesy of the ss Great Britain Trust

Hull
Brunel had originally planned to build a wooden ship, but changed the design to iron as it was cheaper, stronger, lighter, and wouldn't rot. It was the longest passenger ship of its time at 98m (322ft).

Propeller
Until 1839, steamships had been driven by paddle wheels. Brunel chose to design ss Great Britain with a new invention called a screw propeller. These also operated using steam but were more economic and allowed greater speed and stability for the ship.

Engine
The steam engine was three storeys high and ran on 200 tons of sea water that was stored in the boiler – the largest of its time. It could power the ship forward at a rate of 12 knots.

without having to be cleaned, making long sea journeys possible. The first steam-assisted crossing of the Atlantic had taken place in 1819, when US ship Savannah sailed from Georgia to Liverpool in 633 hours. Brunel, seeing the feats of engineering accomplished by his rivals, persuaded his directors that a transatlantic shipping line would be a natural extension to the services offered by their railway.

Determined to outdo the Americans one way or another, in 1838 he launched SS Great Western – the longest ship in the world at 236 feet (72 metres). Seven years later, the ss Great Britain was launched, which was considered the most revolutionary ship of the early Victorian period. Designed for speed and comfort, it was made from metal rather than wood, powered by an engine rather than wind or oars, and driven by a propeller rather than paddle wheels. It was equipped with cabins and state rooms for 360 passengers, and had the largest and most lavish dining room ever seen. By 1853, it was operating a London to Australia service, and continued to do so for almost 20 years.

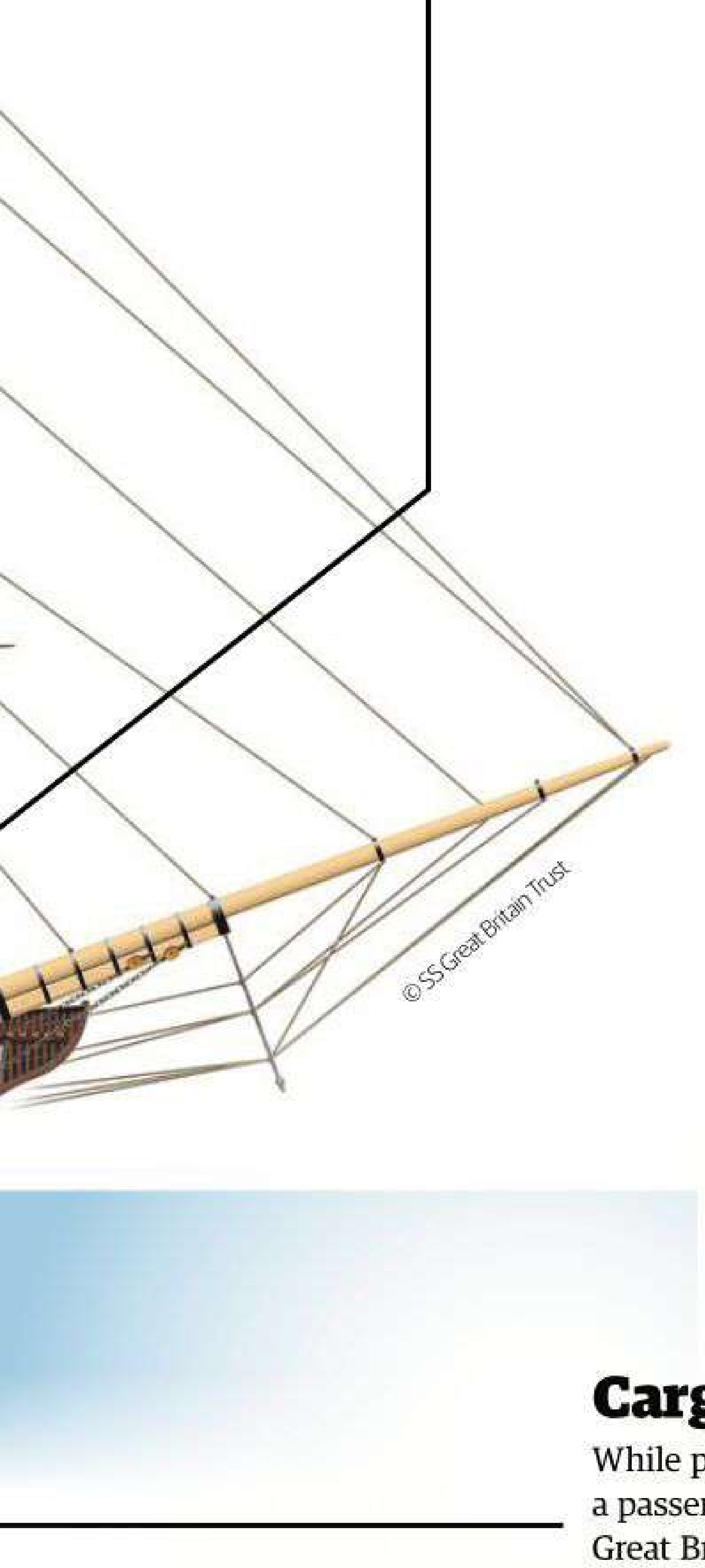
Brunel's engineering vision and innovation made the building of large-scale, propeller-driven, all-metal steamships a practical reality, and between 1860 and 1870 the shipbuilding industry soared. At Clydebank alone, over 800,000 tons of iron ships were built. From the 1870s, steel replaced wrought-iron, resulting in the construction of lighter ships that could travel at much greater speeds.

The Royal Navy were the first to take this brave new step into engineering, launching HMS Iris – the first ever all-steel ship – in 1877. Reaching speeds of over 17 knots, HMS Iris was the fastest ship the world had ever seen. It spelled a new age for Britain's sea warriors.

> "Brunel's engineering vision made the building of large-scale, propeller-driven, all-metal steamships a practical reality"

Cabins

The four decks provided accommodation for 120 crew members and 360 passengers.



© SS Great Britain Trust

Cargo deck

While predominantly a passenger ship, ss Great Britain could also carry 1,200 tons of cargo, and the same amount of coal.

William Fothergill Cooke and Charles Wheatstone installed the first telegraph system in London

Connecting the empire

The invention of the telegraph, telephone and radio signalled the start of a new era of mass communication – one with an international reach

The electrification of Britain, along with the spread of the railway, also spurred on the development of another important industry: telecommunications.

In 1837 two Englishmen called William Fothergill Cooke and Charles Wheatstone installed the first commercial telegraph system between Euston railway station and Camden Town. The system used electric currents to move magnetic needles and thus transmit messages in code. It was used across the rail network, both to send messages and to control signalling. An undersea cable was built between England and France, and Brunel's Great Eastern steamship later laid down the first transatlantic cable.

The global network spread rapidly. With transmitters in every post office, mass communication was now possible. With the invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876, and Guglielmo Marconi's development of practical radio transmissions in 1897, the empire suddenly became a much smaller place, but an even bigger market to trade in.

© Alamy

"His expedition parties helped open up Africa to the Western world"

Henry Stanley's line "Dr Livingstone, I presume?" has become a famous remark from history

DAVID LIVINGSTONE
1813-1873

Brief Bio

Missionary and explorer, Livingstone made his name in the continent of Africa in his attempts to spread Christianity to the indigenous people, abolish slavery and discover the source of the River Nile. His efforts and expeditions were unsuccessful in their ultimate goals but nonetheless he became a national hero upon his death.

David Livingstone:

Missionary on a mission

The legendary Scottish explorer dedicated his life to exploring Africa and had an obsession for finding the true source of the River Nile

Before the first missionaries began to explore the continent, Africa was a vast unknown landmass for most Europeans and people from the Americas. One of the men who helped open up the hitherto mostly unseen continent was a Scot by the name of David Livingstone. He and a select few explorers blazed a trail through the region, initiating the Scramble for Africa, which would alter the political and economic landscape of the continent forever.

Born just south of Glasgow on 19 March 1813 in a tiny hamlet called Blantyre, Livingstone began working in a cotton mill at the age of ten. He was taught to read and write by his shopkeeper father and by 1836 he had gathered enough funds to begin studying medicine and theology. This rise from working-class life in Scotland to international fame was a very rare feat in the Victorian era.

Livingstone and his wife Mary had six children: Robert, Agnes, Thomas, Elizabeth, William Oswell and Anna Mary

Livingstone undertook his studies at Anderson's University, Glasgow but later moved to London to continue his education at various institutions. His goal was to become a missionary doctor and go to China, but he was advised against travelling to the war-torn nation. In 1841 he was posted by the London Missionary Society to the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa, exploring Lake Nagmi in present-day Botswana.

Livingstone was a man of God and on this first trip he introduced the peoples of Africa to Christianity and worked tirelessly to prevent the spread of the slave trade. By the time he returned to Britain in 1856, Livingstone had become a national icon. He embarked on speaking tours to tell of his experiences and wrote a bestselling book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*.

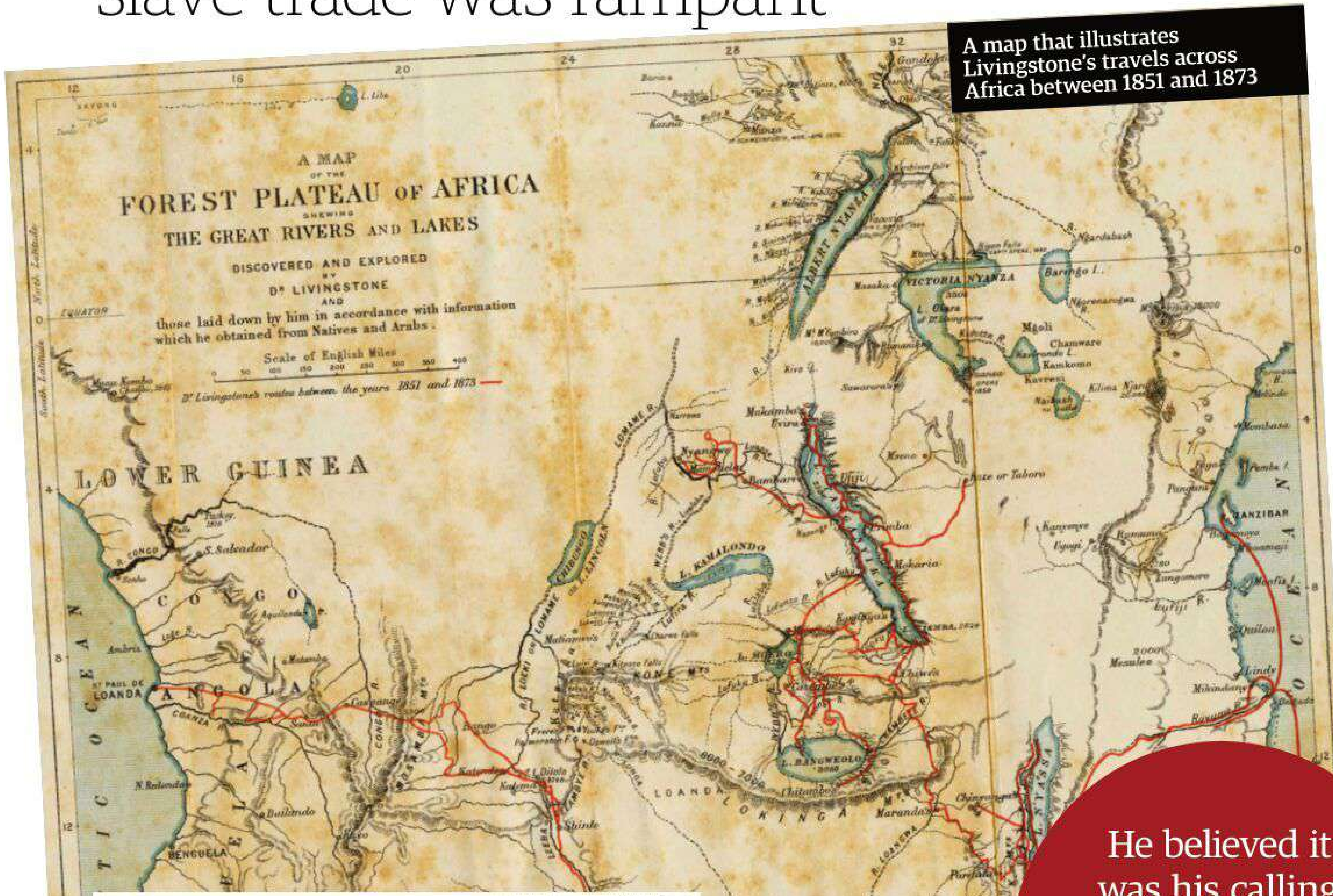
By 1851 he had traversed the whole of the Kalahari via a combination of canoe, ox-back and on foot, almost dying from disease and wild animal attacks. Remarkably, his wife and children had initially joined him, but were forced to return home after a year due to ill health. He didn't stop, continuing to the coast in what is now modern-day Namibia and Angola.

In May 1856 he became the first European to cross the width of southern Africa as he reached the mouth of the Zambezi in Quelimane (present-day Mozambique) at the Indian Ocean. Known as the 'Smoke that Thunders' by locals, the colossal Zambezi waterfalls were renamed Victoria Falls by Livingstone.

A trailblazer, he was the first recorded white man to meet the local tribes of southern and central Africa. It is said that he personally released 150 slaves who worked near Lake Nyasa. His expedition ran into trouble when they had to abandon their original boat and there was a lot of infighting within the crew on the way. During his visits, he gained a reputation as a healer or 'medicine man' as he made a routine of treating the ill native Africans. His skill at removing tumours, for example, was unheard of in this part of the world.

A prolific writer, Livingstone made sure that all his findings were noted down. His conclusions

> "Livingstone firmly believed in the dignity of Africans at a time when the slave trade was rampant"


A MAP OF THE FOREST PLATEAU OF AFRICA
SHEWING THE GREAT RIVERS AND LAKES
DISCOVERED AND EXPLORED BY Dr LIVINGSTONE
AND those laid down by him in accordance with information which he obtained from Natives and Arabs.
Scale of English Miles
Dr Livingstone's routes between the years 1851 and 1873
LOWER GUINEA
CONGO
ANGOLA
LOANDA
ALBERT NYANZA
VICTORIA NYANZA
ZANZIBAR

A map that illustrates Livingstone's travels across Africa between 1851 and 1873

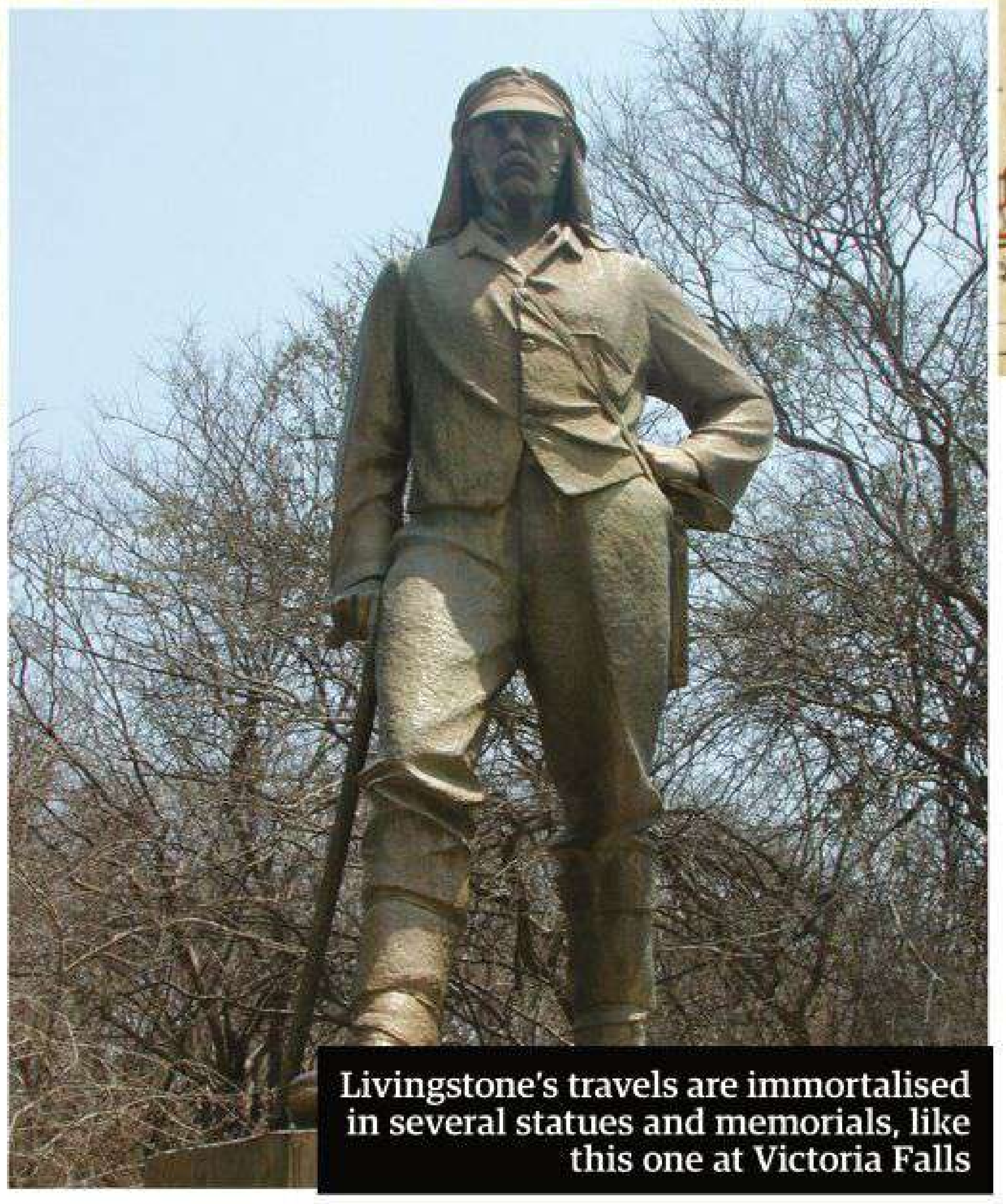
in *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries* helped advance the knowledge of scurvy and malaria, diseases that were prevalent across the globe at this time. He was the first to use the drug quinine as a remedy for malaria, and his careful and methodical approach helped make his transcontinental journey one of the lowest ever in terms of death rates. The Scot was one of the first to link mosquitos to malaria and climate to the spread of tropical diseases.

After more official government-funded tours in the late 1850s, Livingstone had a tough few years. His wife Mary died of malaria in 1862, then two years later he was ordered to return home by a government unimpressed with his work. One of Livingstone's major aims was to publicise the horrors of the slave trade. Back in Europe, not many knew of the callous ways in which African people were being taken from their homelands and forced into labour. He became a staunch abolitionist and used his pen to raise awareness at home to what was happening.

Unfortunately, his constant excursions can be argued to have had a negative effect on the future of Africa. By discovering a whole wealth of villages, water sources and trade routes, Livingstone and his expedition parties helped open up Africa to the Western world. As a result, colonialism and the Scramble for Africa by the major European nations was made easier. Some see imperialism as owing a lot to Livingstone and his fellow explorers.

By 1866, the 52-year-old Scot had secured enough funding to return to Africa, this time to seek the source of the River Nile and crusade against slavery. Landing at Zanzibar, Livingstone got so caught up in his

> He believed it was his calling to explore Africa and open it up to Christianity by the will of God



Livingstone's travels are immortalised in several statues and memorials, like this one at Victoria Falls

Defining moment

University life

1836-41

Using savings amassed from years of hard work at Blantyre mill, Livingstone finally has enough money to go to university in 1836. After two years at Anderson's College, Glasgow he suspends his studies in favour of a year training with the London Missionary Society. He eventually moves to London in 1840 to complete a course in Medical Studies at the British and Foreign Medical School before returning to Glasgow to qualify from the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

Defining moment

Finding a route to the coast

1852-56

Livingstone begins a four-year quest to find a route from the Upper Zambezi River to the coast. The expedition plugs many gaps in Western knowledge of Southern and Central Africa. Perhaps his most famous find is the discovery of an almighty waterfall, which Livingstone renames Victoria Falls after Britain's monarch. By 1856, he reaches the mouth of the Zambezi, becoming the first European to cross the width of southern Africa. He returns home to a hero's welcome. With the mapping of the Zambezi complete, Livingstone now has his mind set on finding the source of the Nile.

Timeline

1813

Birth of an explorer

David Livingstone is born in the small hamlet of Blantyre, just south of Glasgow. Born into a working-class family, he is the second to be born out of a total of seven.
19 March 1813

1823

Schooling and early work

At the age of ten, Livingstone begins work in a local cotton mill. He finds time to study in the evenings and is taught to read and write by his father.
1823

1836

Leaves school

To further his studies, the young Scot gains a place at Anderson's University, Glasgow. He goes on to study medicine and theology and becomes interested in natural history.
1836

1841

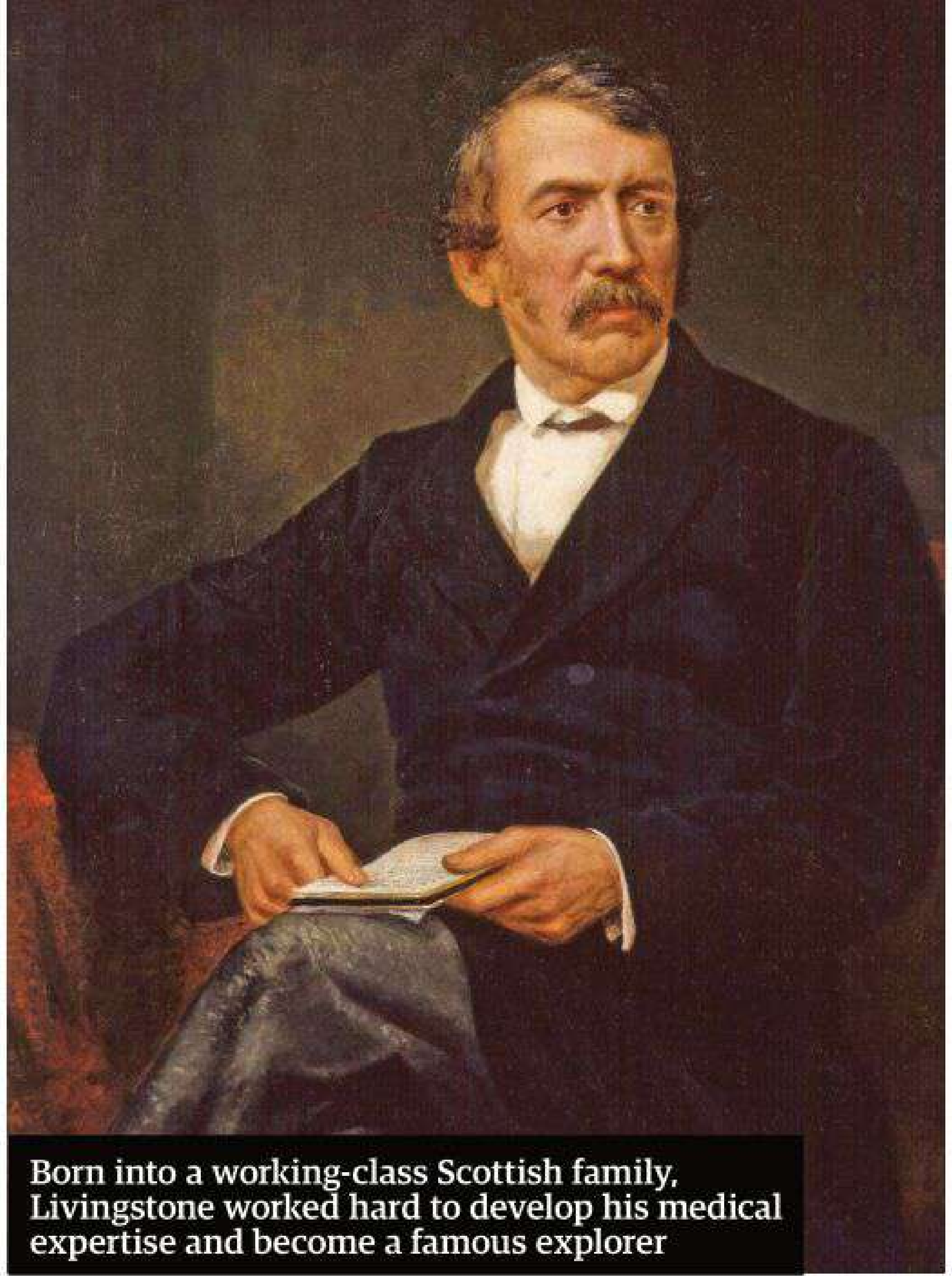
First assignment

After word of his expertise gets out, Livingstone is taken on by the London Missionary Society and posted to the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. His aim is to spread Christianity and bring 'civilisation' to the native peoples.
1841

1845

Happily married

Returning home from his travels, Livingstone marries Mary Moffat, the daughter of a fellow missionary. They would have three sons and three daughters together.
January 1845



Born into a working-class Scottish family, Livingstone worked hard to develop his medical expertise and become a famous explorer

exploring that the British government lost track of the great man. On the way, the explorer is said to have witnessed a massacre of hundreds of people in the village of Nyangwe on the River Lualaba, which was said to have been undertaken by Arabic slave traders.

On his journey, he lost the majority of his medicine, animals and companions. In the end, money was raised by the *Daily Telegraph* and *New York Herald* to send journalist Henry Stanley to Africa to locate his whereabouts. In February 1871, Livingstone became stuck in the village of Bambarre in Congo. With almost none of his crew left and suffering from pneumonia and tropical flesh-eating ulcers, he was not in a good condition. Reports claim that he was bedridden and had begun to hallucinate, with only the Bible to provide him comfort. He was eventually found in October in Ujiji, Tanzania, as he pressed on to find the source of the world's longest river. After staying with him briefly and taking on his fresh supplies, Livingstone parted ways with Stanley to continue his journey.

Although his health was failing, Livingstone was dedicated to his work and refused to leave Africa. This determined and stubborn attitude eventually proved to be his undoing; he died at the age of 60 at Chitambo's village, near Lake Bangweulu, North Rhodesia (now Zambia) on the night of 30 April 1873. The British public mourned his loss and he was given a prestigious burial in the nave of Westminster Abbey. He is buried next to James Rennell, a former explorer who founded the Society for African Exploration.

Livingstone is remembered as a man who firmly believed in the dignity of Africans at a time when the slave trade was rampant over the continent. Even though he didn't quite reach the source of the Nile, his contribution to society was his constant questioning of the sustainability of Europeans using Africa as a sort of commercial enterprise. When his embalmed body was returned to Britain – via a 1,603 kilometre (1,000 mile) trek to Zanzibar that took ten months – it was found that his arm had been broken by a lion, further demonstrating the tough ordeals that he had undertook on his journeys. Before the body left Africa, his heart had been buried under a mpundu tree in the village. Both metaphorically and physically, David Livingstone's heart will always be in Africa.

In the David Livingstone National Memorial in his hometown of Blantyre, his gravestone reads: "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea, here rests David Livingstone, missionary, traveller, philanthropist, born March 19. 1813 at Blantyre, Lanarkshire, died in May 1873 at Chitambo's village." For 30 years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelise the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets and to abolish the desolating slave trade of central Africa. With his last words he wrote, "All I can add in my solitude, is, may heaven's rich blessing come down on every one, American, English, or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world".'

> His son Robert fought for the Union side in the US Civil War and died of battle wounds on 5 December 1864

Defining moment

Doctor Livingstone, I presume?

1866-1871

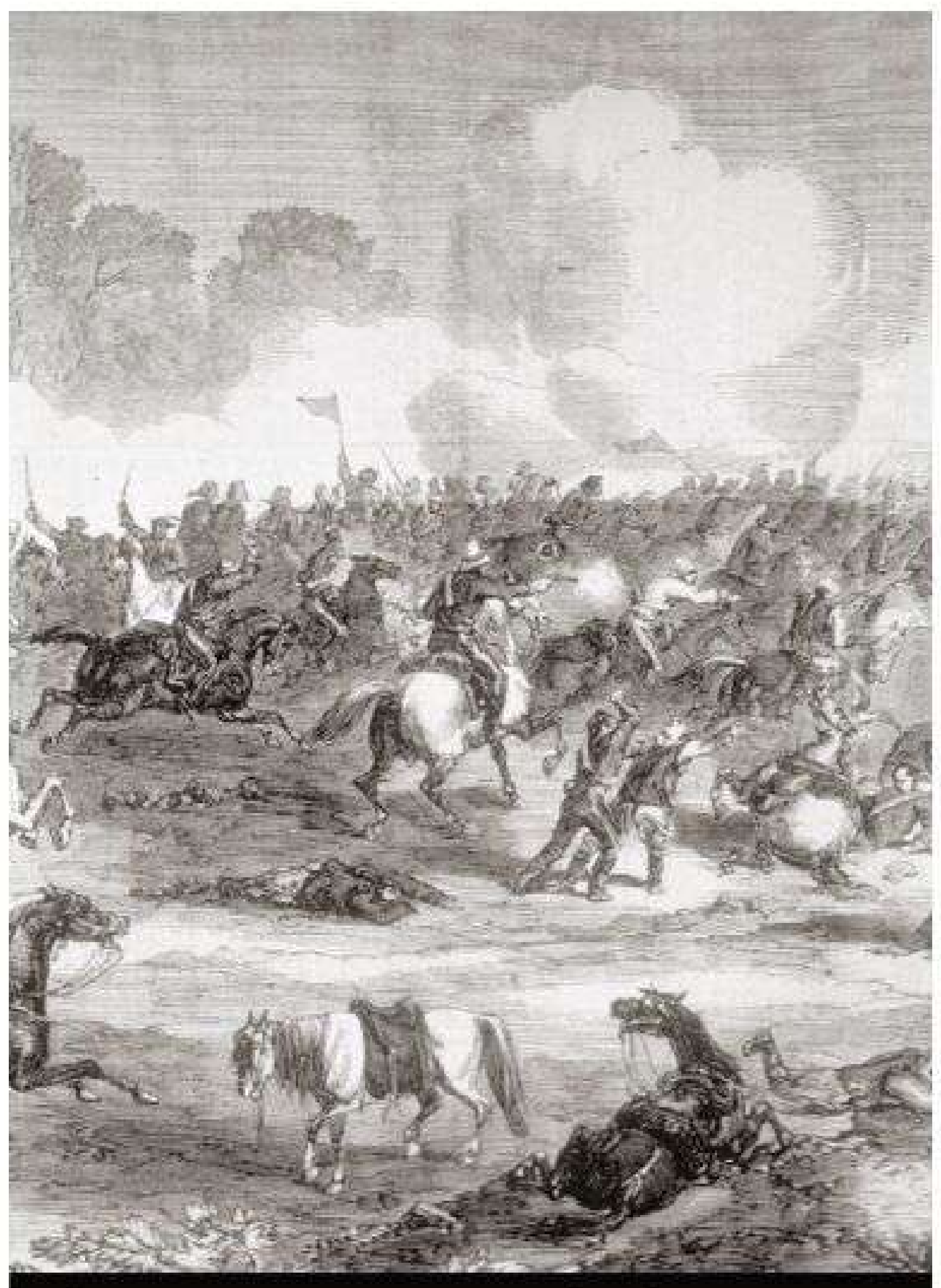
By 1866, the now veteran explorer is aged 52, but is still intent on discovering the source of the Nile. The trip takes its toll as he loses animals, medicine and porters, but Livingstone soldiers on. He is gone so long that fellow explorer Henry Stanley is dispatched to find him. After a long search, Livingstone is eventually found near Lake Tanganyika in October 1871 – during their meeting, Stanley utters that now famous phrase. Livingstone is resupplied but never manages to achieve his goal after ill health causes him to stop.

The Second Opium War

David Livingstone was encouraged not to go to China, and for good reason. Between 1856 and 1860, the country was at war with the British in a conflict known as the Second Opium War. After the First Opium War ended with an unequal treaty, a Chinese vessel believed to have been smuggling initiated a second conflict. The British, assisted by American warships, responded with force, shelling Canton (modern-day Guangzhou) before being driven back by the resurgent Chinese.

The Western powers sought the help of the French and returned in May 1858, this time taking Canton and a number of forts near Tientsin. The treaty of Tientsin was subsequently signed, which opened up China to trade with the West. However, China was not content with these terms and took the fight to the British fleet situated at the Peiho river.

The Second Opium War came to an end with one final land assault as the British and French took Peking, resulting in the fleeing of the Chinese Emperor Xianfeng. In defeat, China didn't have any choice but to agree to Western trade terms in yet another unequal treaty. It was at this point that a 99-year lease was signed, giving Britain control of the 'New Territories' around the port Hong Kong until 1997.



The King's Dragoon Guards close in on Tartar cavalry near Peking during the Second Opium War

1856

Return home

After his expedition ends, he returns home a national hero and embarks on speaking tours around Britain. His book *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* becomes a bestseller.
1856

1858

Back to Africa

The now-famous explorer begins his longest excursion to date, a five-year exploration mission of eastern and central Africa. Sadly, his wife Mary would go on to die from malaria in 1862.
1858

1864

Government pressure

After an unrewarding trip, the British government orders Livingstone to return to Britain. Back home, the Scot begins to write about the horrors of the slave trade, publicising this to many for the first time.
1864

1866

One last expedition

After acquiring private funding, Livingstone sets off once again for Africa, this time in search of the source of the River Nile. He also takes this opportunity to explore the slave trade further.
1866

1873

Final years

After years of exploration, Livingstone is dogged with health problems and dies on the night of 30 April 1873. He is buried in Westminster Abbey and goes on to be remembered as one of Britain's greatest explorers.
1873

During the period of the Raj, 20,000 British officials and troops ruled over a staggering 300 million Indians

Taken from the *Illustrated London News*, this 1857 illustration shows troops storming the Cashmere Gate during the Siege of Delhi

Empress of India

India was the 'jewel in the crown' of the empire, but the journey to mounting it there was one of ignorance, violence and bloodshed

On 22 June 1897 the entire British Empire united to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Although the event officially celebrated her record-breaking reign, it also came to symbolise the achievements of the empire the world over. There was a procession of gleaming golden carriages, and the best and brightest troops marched through the capital in an array of colours. Men and women from all over the empire flooded to London to partake in the festivities, but one nation in particular stood as the crowning glory of the British Crown: India.

Indian troops made up a huge proportion of the empire's fighting power, and the country's lucrative trade had given Britain the riches to host such an elaborate event. However, the fight for control over this prosperous and valuable nation had been a brutal and bloody one, far removed from the pomp and ceremony that now celebrated it.

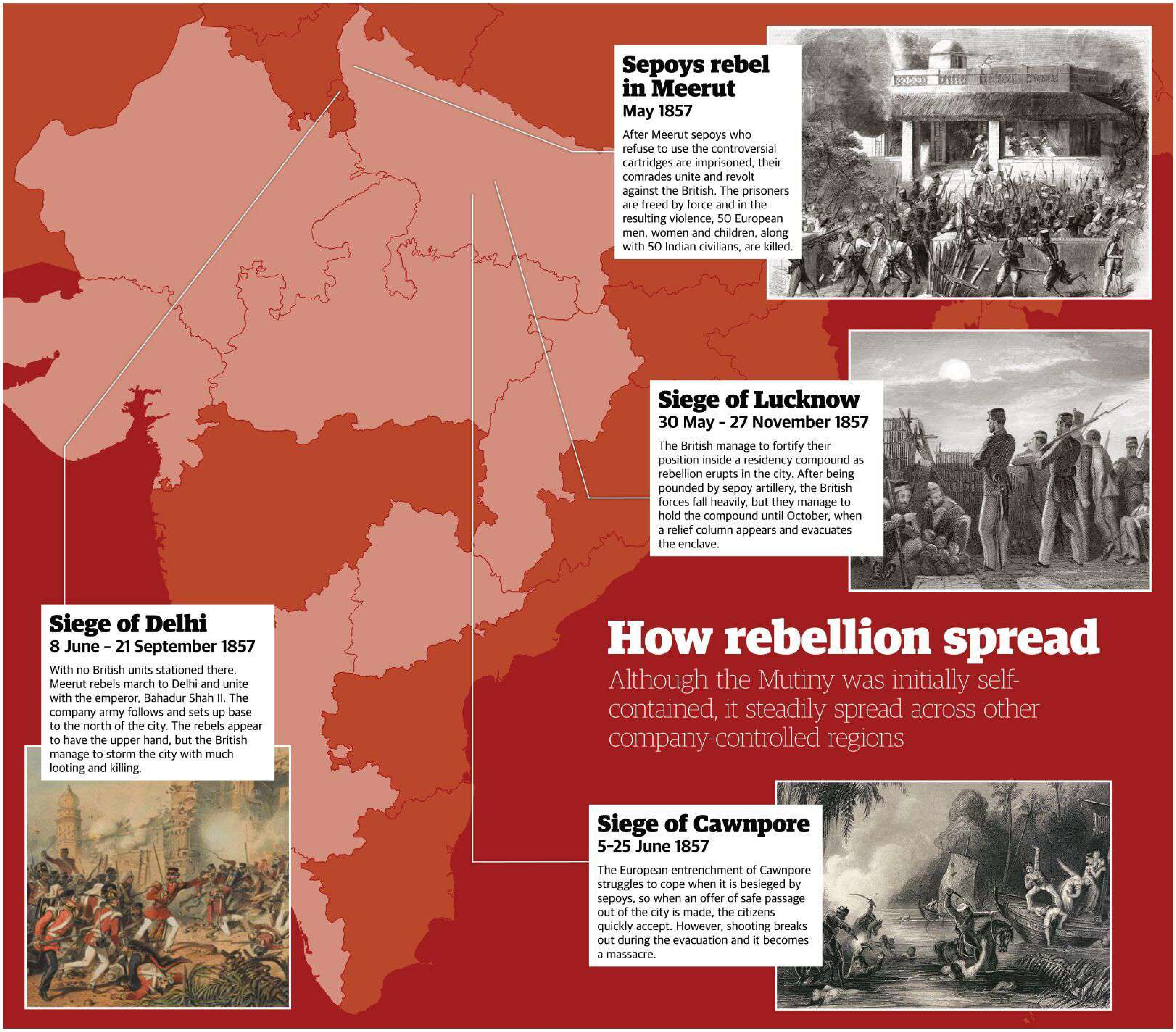
It was not Britain that had conquered India. Not its Crown, government or even its armies; it had been conquered by a private trading company. Beginning with a single factory in the early 17th Century, the East India Company slowly expanded its foothold in India. As its wealth increased, it formed a private army of native troops. Any part of India that rebelled against the company was crushed by its army, and the ranks grew and grew with fresh troops. By the time Victoria ascended the throne, the East India Company owned territory ten times the size of the British Isles, containing five times the population. The men of the East India Company lived as virtual kings, enjoying the riches of their conquered land, which even included its women. Many British men took Indian wives and mistresses, but a new transport route that opened in 1837 would change everything.

The journey to India had been a long and arduous one, but that year a speedy steamer service across Egypt and down the Red Sea was paved. This was intended to help boost trade, but it also attracted two new sets of travellers - British women and missionaries. The effect these new visitors had upon India was huge. British men were now expected to stay with British women and, rather than being part of the household, Indians were demoted to servants and maids. The British families lived in European-only enclaves, and a gulf was driven between the two races.

The missionaries did perhaps even more damage; armed with the Bible and their Victorian ideals, they were determined to make the land more Christian and, in their opinion, civilised. They regarded Islam and especially Hinduism - the two central religions of the region - as akin to idol worship. Indian traditions such as *sati* (or *suttee*), which entailed a widow throwing herself onto their husband's funeral pyre, were seen as a representation of these religions, fully confirming to the British back home that India was a place very much in need of a good Christian cleansing.

Combined with new technology, especially the railways being built up and down the country, the native Indians began to feel that their traditional way of life was under serious threat of being wiped out. The people who had started as employers, mutually benefiting from the trade produced by the land, had transformed into cruel, uncaring masters, and steadily the Indian population grew more and more frustrated.

The seed of rebellion was already sown in the minds of many of India's most powerful men. Rumours of fatal British errors and even possible defeat during the Crimean War slowly fed into



How rebellion spread

Although the Mutiny was initially self-contained, it steadily spread across other company-controlled regions

Sepoys rebel in Meerut
May 1857

After Meerut sepoys who refuse to use the controversial cartridges are imprisoned, their comrades unite and revolt against the British. The prisoners are freed by force and in the resulting violence, 50 European men, women and children, along with 50 Indian civilians, are killed.

Siege of Lucknow
30 May – 27 November 1857

The British manage to fortify their position inside a residency compound as rebellion erupts in the city. After being pounded by sepoy artillery, the British forces fall heavily, but they manage to hold the compound until October, when a relief column appears and evacuates the enclave.

Siege of Delhi
8 June – 21 September 1857

With no British units stationed there, Meerut rebels march to Delhi and unite with the emperor, Bahadur Shah II. The company army follows and sets up base to the north of the city. The rebels appear to have the upper hand, but the British manage to storm the city with much looting and killing.

Siege of Cawnpore
5-25 June 1857

The European entrenchment of Cawnpore struggles to cope when it is besieged by sepoys, so when an offer of safe passage out of the city is made, the citizens quickly accept. However, shooting breaks out during the evacuation and it becomes a massacre.

the Indian consciousness, and secret Indian press leaflets against British rule began to be distributed. Whispers of British defeat overseas and that the Russians were heading for India also spread among both Hindu and Muslim populations.

The British had attempted to present themselves as rulers, frequently displaying their wealth and superiority, but in reality, this was a well-constructed lie, and the Indian people were beginning to see through it. The real power of the East India Company lay not in its large houses, but its native troops. The Indian army was ten times the size of the British army in India, and their loyalty was the backbone of the company's power. The kindling for revolution was all in place; all it needed was a single spark to initiate it.

This spark came in the form of a gun cartridge. The cartridges for the new rifles introduced by the company were rumoured to be coated in a combination of pork and beef fat, and the deeply religious soldiers were mortified. This typified everything the Indian people feared: the methodical elimination of their beliefs and traditions. In Meerut, 85 troopers refused to use the cartridges and were promptly stripped of their uniforms and thrown into prison, sentenced to ten years' hard labour. To the company's officers, such actions were akin to mutiny; unfortunately for them, that is exactly what they had just inspired.

The very next day, Indian troops stormed the prison to release their captive comrades. Spurred on by the fires of injustice and rebellion, they stormed the British quarters, torching every building and slaughtering men, women and children.

The East India Company and Britain very much hoped this was a single freak event, the result of a strict officer laying it on too thick, but soon they were to discover that the 'Mutiny', as it began to be known, was anything but an isolated incident. On 5 June 1857 in Cawnpore, rebel Indian troops turned on their superiors and any men who remained loyal to the British. As they set fire to the European quarters, the people fled to a rundown military entrenchment, hastily fortifying it against the approaching forces. Nana Sahib, an Indian aristocrat who had previously vowed to help the British, took charge of the rebels and encircled the barracks with a force of some 12-15,000 soldiers.

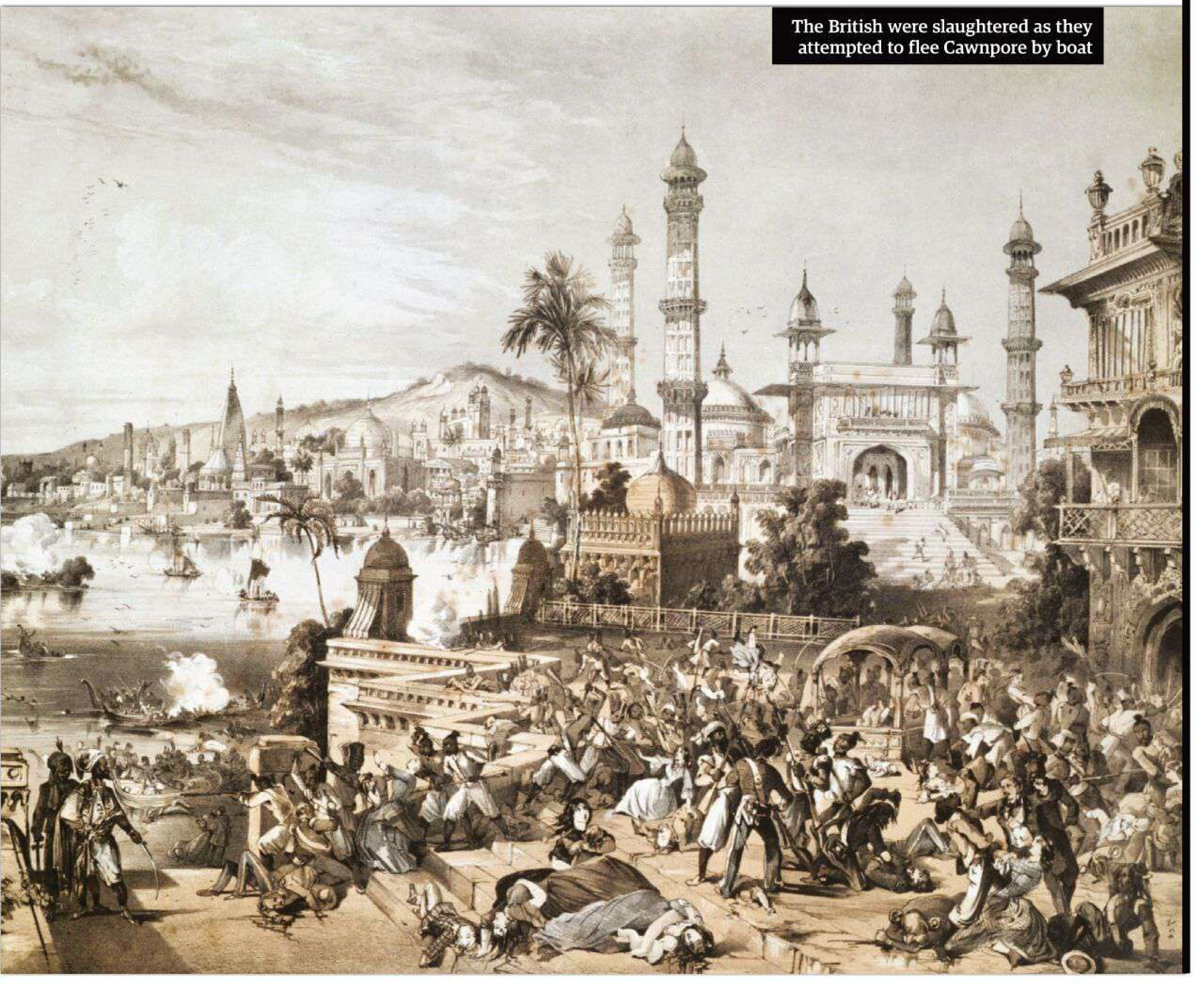
> "They slashed through the men, women and children, dyeing the sea red with their blood. Over 500 people died"

Despite the huge number of Indian rebels pummelling the British fortress with cannons and musket fire, the men, women and children inside managed to hold out. However, conditions became horrific; they were rapidly running out of food and water, disease was rampant and some women even gave birth amid the madness. The hospital building was set alight and all the medical supplies perished. The situation was becoming desperate.

When, on 25 June, Nana Sahib offered safe passage to Allahabad for the British if they left peacefully, they had no option but to accept. A fleet of boats was assembled on the shore and on the morning of 27 June, the British left their entrenchment to climb on board and escape their hellish experience. But, out of nowhere, madness and panic broke out. A shot was fired and the Indian boatmen leapt from the boats and swam to the bank; boats were suddenly set alight and rebel forces began attacking the terrified British. They slashed through the men, women and children, dyeing the sea red with their blood. Over 500 people died, just over 100 were captured and only a handful managed to escape with their lives.

Britain had received news of the situation and had sent some 30,000 troops, but the journey was long and it would take them months to provide aid. However, hope was now on the way from other parts of India. When Nana Sahib learnt of the advancing British troops, he assembled his forces to face them. In an ironic twist of fate, it was the new rifles, which had begun the entire conflict, that aided the British as they were able to pick the rebels off at long range. The Indians who remained fled back to the city to warn of the British advance.

With some 180 British women and children now confined in a single building, it was decided that they had to be killed before the British army arrived. But the rebels were reluctant. Killing armed men was one thing, but women and children sobbing for mercy? The rebel sepoys refused and were scolded for their cowardice. With no soldiers willing to perform the act, butchers were recruited to do the job. The butchers used



The British were slaughtered as they attempted to flee Cawnpore by boat

What sparked the Indian Mutiny?

The wrong cartridges

When the East India Company decided to replace the smooth bore muskets it had used for years with Enfield Rifles, the latter came with sleek new cartridges. In order to use one, the shooter had to bite the end to expose the powder before loading it. However, the grease used to protect the cartridges was rumoured to be made from beef and pork fat. Whether true or not, this was horrifying to the Hindu and Muslim soldiers and many refused to use the cartridges. To the British, this was mutiny.

Taxation

Increased taxes are never popular, and the East India Company gradually increased taxes over its territory. The policy of taxing land belonging to temples and mosques was deeply unpopular. Farmers also faced high taxes on their land, and the mere arrival of British officials, who would measure the land to calculate the amount of tax, could spark riots. As the Mutiny raged, one of the central targets, especially for the peasantry, was the offices used for tax and rent collection.

Bad treatment of soldiers

At first, the officers of the East India Company were well-liked by their Indian soldiers. They made efforts to learn the language, marry Indian women and even fought side-by-side with their men. However, as new officers filled the ranks, this changed. A divide formed between the British and Indians, there was a language barrier, harsher punishments were enforced, the high ranks of the army were closed to Indians and they were paid less than their British counterparts. What initially began as a loyal relationship turned into one, virtually, of master and slave.

Spread of Christianity

There was a belief among the Indian populace that the British government's main goal was to convert them to Christianity. Initially the East India Company had focused almost entirely on trade, but in the 19th century this changed. More and more Christian missionaries poured into the region. Efforts to reduce religious practices, such as *sati* ('widow burning') were seen as righteous by the missionaries, but only served as confirmation of religious intolerance to the suspicious locals. It was these beliefs of religious persecution that would unite the Muslims and Hindus against a common foe.

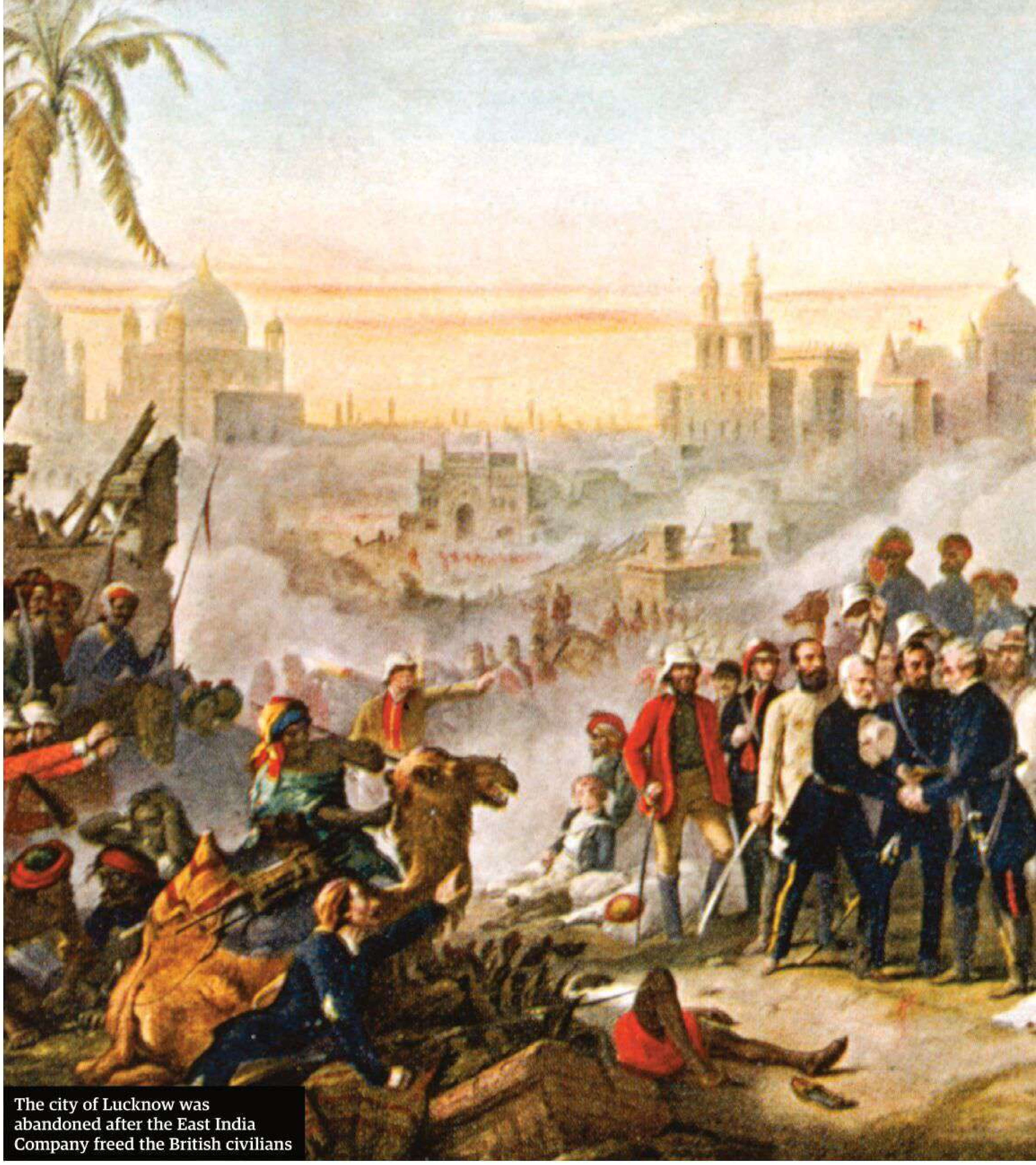
Annexations

The Doctrine of Lapse was a policy that permitted the East India Company to take over any principality where the ruler had died without any natural or 'competent' heirs. This resulted in state after state being annexed, ignoring the ancient rights of adopted heirs. Rani Lakshmi and Nana Sahib were just two victims of the Doctrine who eventually rose up with their own forces in revenge.

cleavers to slaughter the people inside. The next day their mutilated remains were tossed down a well. Several people were found alive, hiding under the corpses, but they were thrown into the well too. By the time the relief force arrived, it was too late. One of the men who stumbled upon the horror described the sight as "the most awful the eye could behold."

When news of the massacre reached Britain, the effect was devastating. Horror and outrage gripped the nation. Queen Victoria had thoroughly instilled in her people the belief that women and children, above all else, must be cherished and held sacred. By slaughtering the women and children, the Indian rebels had attacked the very notion of Britishness. Victoria was shocked and appalled by the events, writing, "my heart bleeds for the horrors that have been committed by people once so gentle on my poor women and innocent little children... It haunts me day and night."

With the myth of imperial power shaken in India, the officers of the East India Company were keen to reinforce it. As British reinforcements finally made it to the country, Nana Sahib had vanished, so they took their outrage out on any Indian forces they could find. Captured mutineers suffered a variety of horrendous punishments - some were force-fed beef and pork, others were tied to guns and blown to smithereens; some were told to run, only to be shot dead as they tried to flee. One British commander alone executed some 6,000 men. Any chance of a civilised co-existence between India and the East India Company was smashed to pieces and the company's grip on power was loosening by the day.



The city of Lucknow was abandoned after the East India Company freed the British civilians

Rani of Jhansi

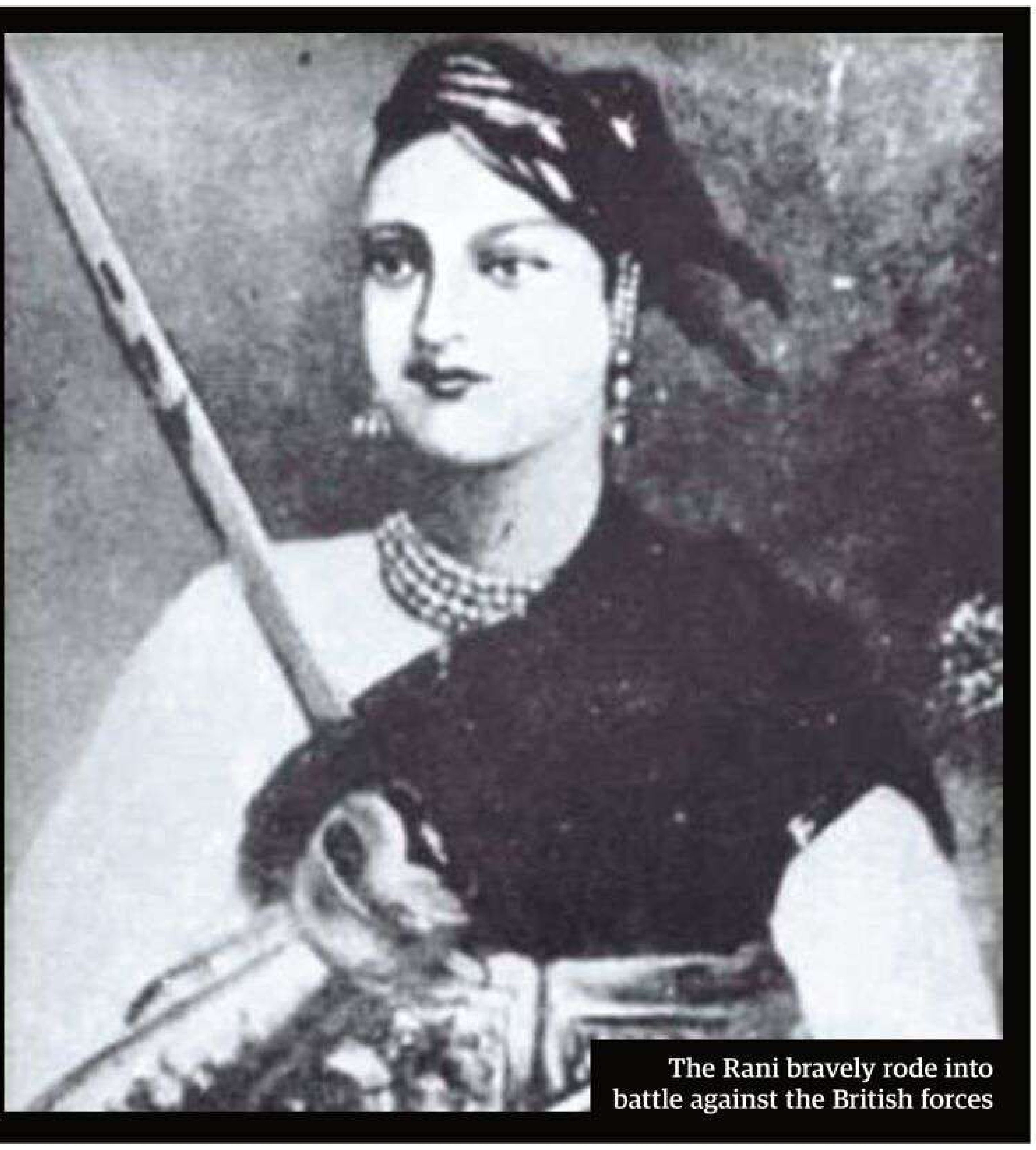
A Indian Joan of Arc, she became a symbol and martyr of the Mutiny

Born in 1828 with the birth name Lakshmibai, Rani of Jhansi was the daughter of a man who served Bithur court of the Maratha Peshwa, and she was raised as his daughter. A clever and athletic girl, she received training in horse riding, archery and swordsmanship. Lakshmibai married the aging Maharaja of Jhansi in 1842, but by 1853 he was dead. Instead of honouring the rights of his recently adopted son, the British East India Company used the Doctrine of Lapse policy to seize the Jhansi state and left the Rani with orders to vacate her palace.

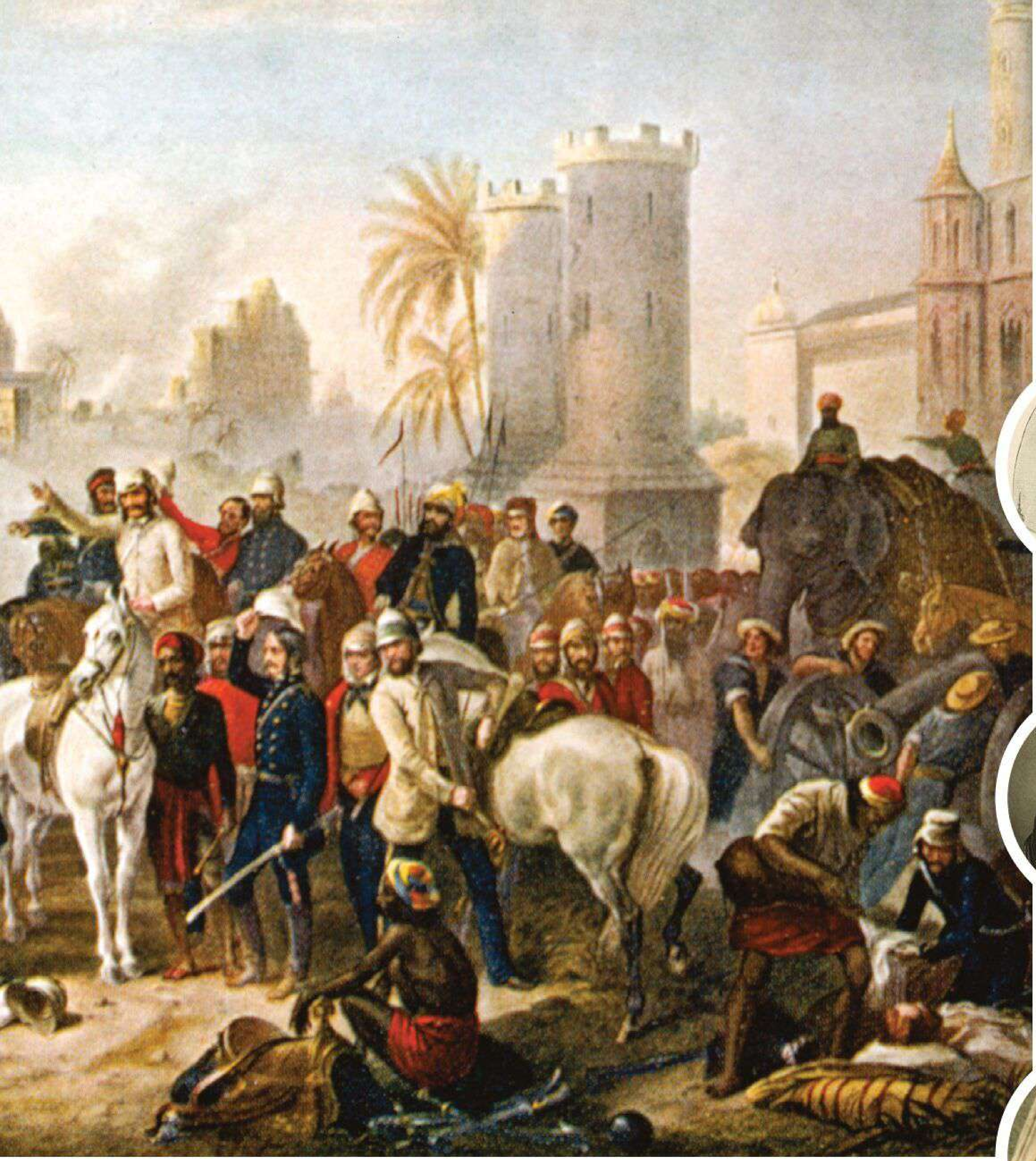
When the Indian Mutiny broke out, opposition to British rule soon focused on the recently annexed Jhansi. At first, the Rani was reluctant to raise the flag. However, in 1857, men of the Bengal Native Infantry massacred all the British men, women and children hiding in the Jhansi fort - for which the British blamed the Rani. Now solely in charge of the defence of Jhansi, she organised food provisions and set up a foundry to produce ammunition.

When Major-General Sir Hugh Rose, leading the British forces, arrived in the city he found a well-defended fort and ordered they surrender or the city would be destroyed. Lakshmibai replied, "We fight for independence. In the words of Lord Krishna, we will if we are victorious, enjoy the fruits of victory, if defeated and killed on the field of battle, we shall surely earn eternal glory and salvation." After holding out for several days, the fort was stormed by the British and looted. Riding with her son on her back, Lakshmibai barely escaped with her life. The Rani combined her army with other rebel forces and defeated the army of the Maharaja of Gwalior, who quickly defected to the Rani's side. However, Rose was close behind and on 17 June he launched a surprise attack at Gwalior. As her army fled, Lakshmibai donned a soldier's uniform and rode into battle. When unhorsed, she continued to fight until she was fatally shot.

The Rani's bravery and sacrifice inspired not only her countrymen, she was also commended by her enemies. She was later upheld as a forerunner of the independence movement which would grip India in the 1940s and result in the end of British rule.



The Rani bravely rode into battle against the British forces



These horrific actions did not go unnoticed back in Britain. The entire country had been told repeatedly that they were the enlightened, civilised nation, bringing morality to savage lands – but these were not reasonable actions. Even Queen Victoria herself was outraged by the brutality of the British forces against old men, women and children. She argued that they should show moderation, "for then how can we expect any respect or esteem for us in the future?" Calling their actions "shameful", she asked for "pardon for our sins" and the "restoration of tranquillity".

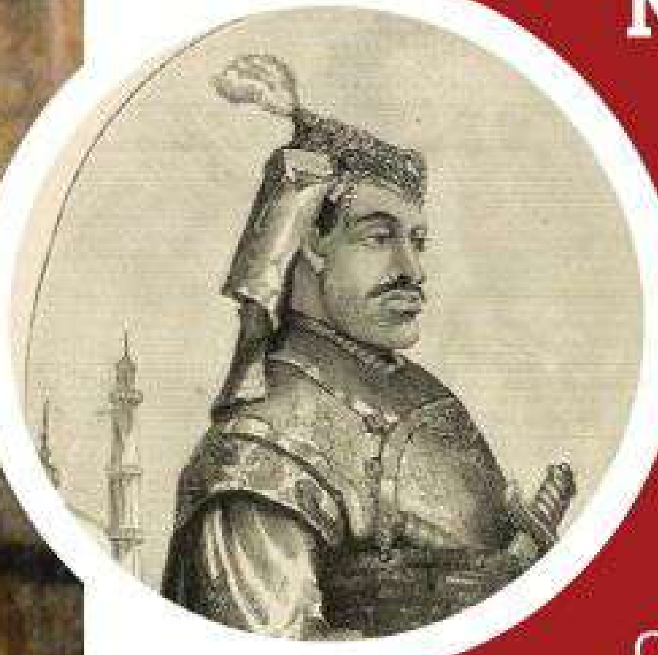
Her nation agreed. The situation in India had completely spiralled out of control. If things continued this way, Britain risked losing not only thousands of lives, but control over the country for good. In 1858 the British government passed the Government of India Act, abolishing the East India Company and transferring direct rule of India to the British Crown.

The infamous Doctrine of Lapse policy, which denied the adopted children of Indian princes their inheritance, was abolished, as were social measures deemed offensive to the Indian people's religious beliefs. Victoria was eager that the document "breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious feeling." When the proclamation was finally drawn up, she was pleased with it, proclaiming it to be "the beginning of a new era" that would "draw a veil over the sad and bloody past."

Over the next 30 years, British rule would oversee India's rapid economic growth, as well as a host of technological developments – most notably roads, the railway network and the telegraph. These advances allowed places like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to grow into major cities.

British rule of this powerful and prosperous nation solidified the empire's position in the world. Victoria herself, ever wary of the horrors that had unfolded in the years of rebellion, was eager to keep ties and commitment to India as visual as possible. She created an Indian order of knighthood to strengthen the bonds with the loyal Indian princes, and from then on until her death kept Indian attendants by her side. When she was finally named India's Empress, grand statues of Victoria were shipped out to India to be displayed in the highest honour, and by the time of her death, India had turned into the biggest, richest and most significant colony in the empire – or, as Victoria put it, the jewel in her crown.

Major players in the rebellion



Nana Sahib

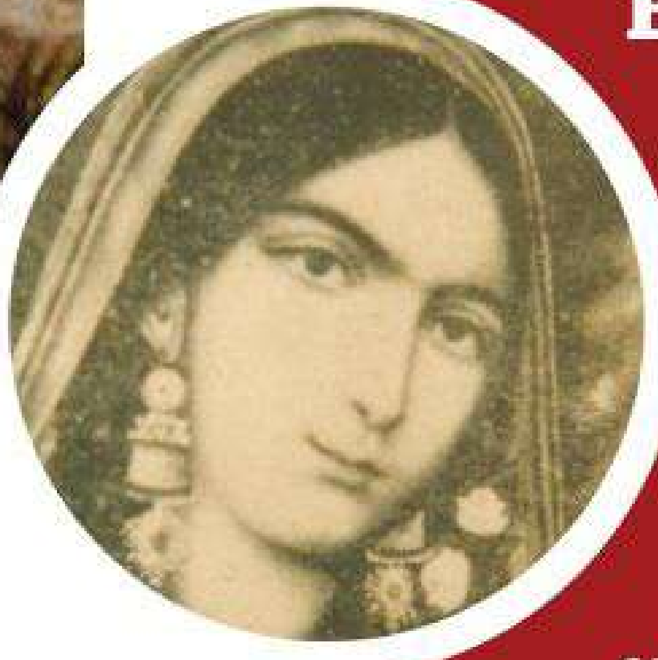
1824-1857 (disappeared)

Sahib was the adopted son of an exiled prince. When the East India Company rejected his claim to his father's pension, for which he was supposed to be entitled, Sahib turned on the British and went on to lead the Cawnpore rebellion. He mysteriously disappeared after the capture of Cawnpore, but was hailed as a freedom fighter in India.

Charles Canning

1812-1862

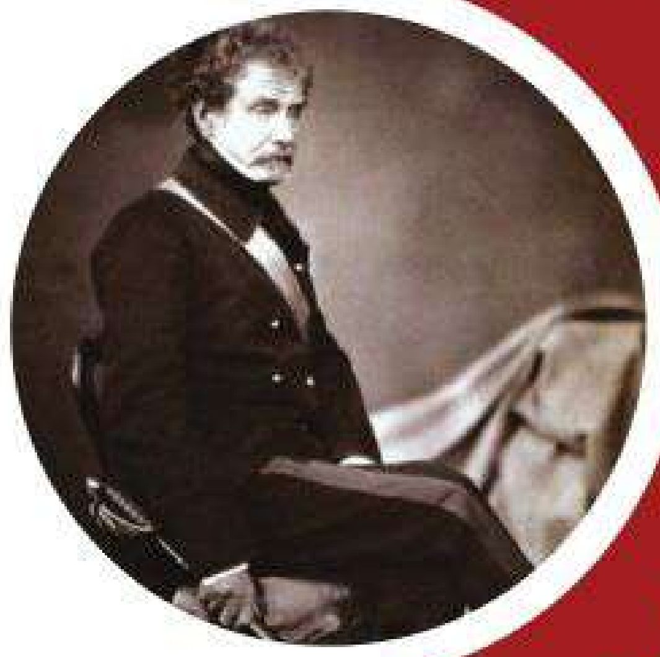
Serving as governor-general of India during the rebellion, Canning's calm approach led many to believe he did not understand the gravity of the situation. However, Canning saw British India safely through the storm and showed restraint when punishing the rebels, leading to greater unity between the two nations. He earned the nickname 'Clemency Canning' (derisively from the British) for his leniency.



Begum Hazrat Mahal

1820-1879

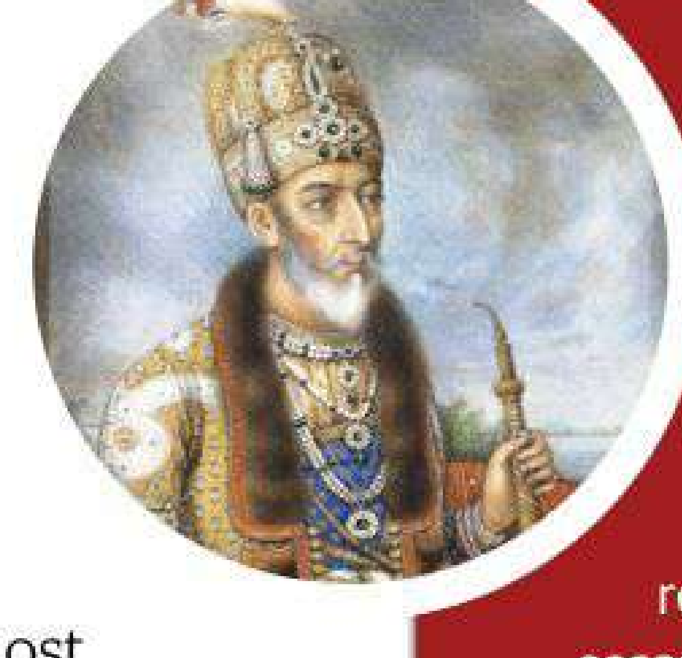
The first wife of the ruler of the state of Awadh, when the kingdom was annexed in 1856 and her husband was exiled, she took control of the state. When the rebellion broke out, she led a band of supporters and they seized control of Lucknow. When the siege was broken, however, she was forced to retreat to Nepal.



Colin Campbell

1792-1863

After serving in several conflicts, including the Crimean War and First Opium War, Campbell was appointed as commander-in-chief of India. He quickly relieved and evacuated the British people trapped in Lucknow, and then defeated the rebel leader Tatya Tope at the Second Battle of Cawnpore.



Bahadur Shah II

1775-1862

Bahadur succeeded his father in 1837 to become the last Mughal emperor, albeit over a much reduced empire. When rebellion broke out, he was viewed by many rebels as the emperor of India due to his neutral views on religion. He later sought refuge to escape the British, but was captured, exiled and his sons were killed.

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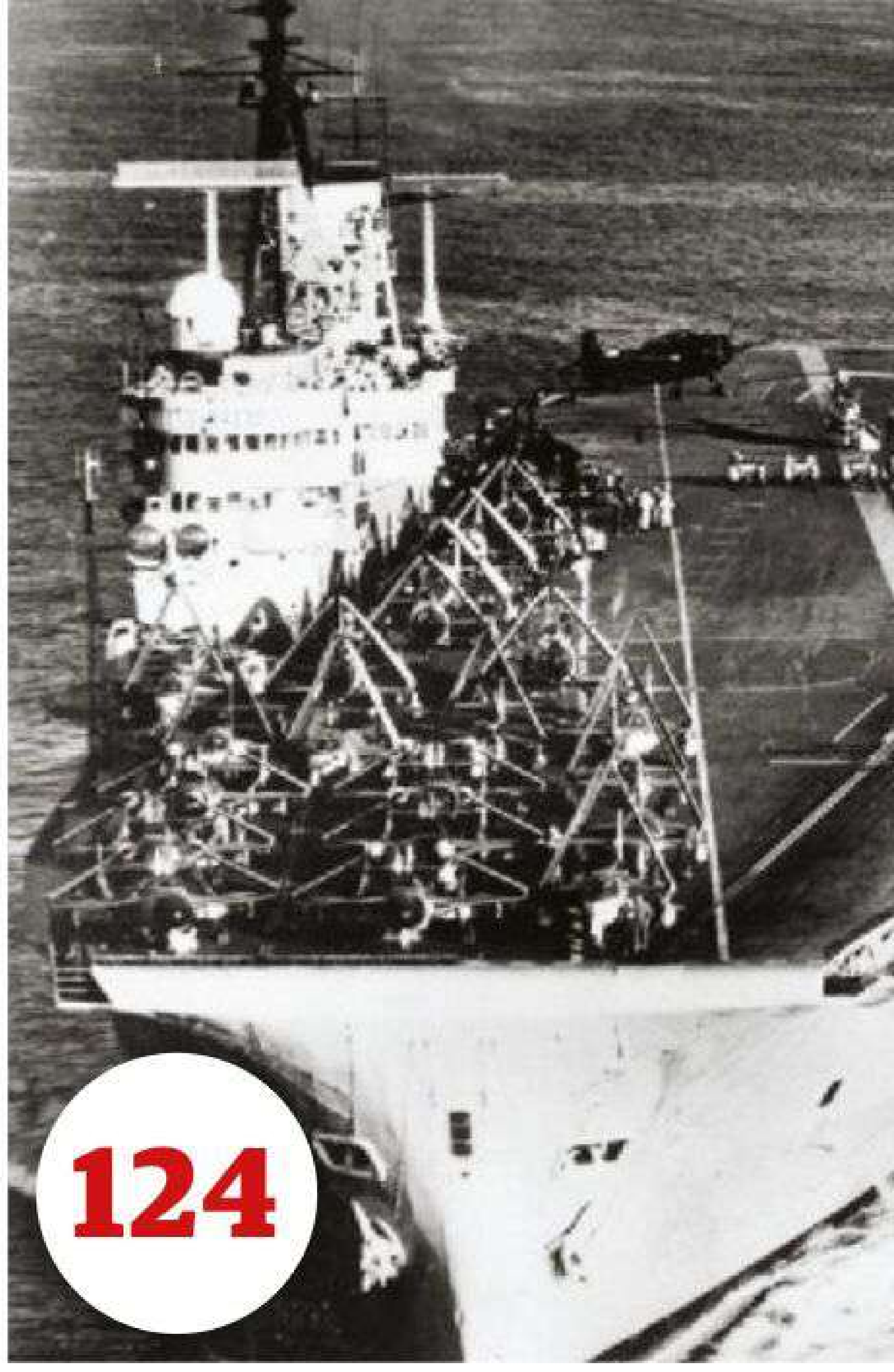

DECLINE & LEGACY

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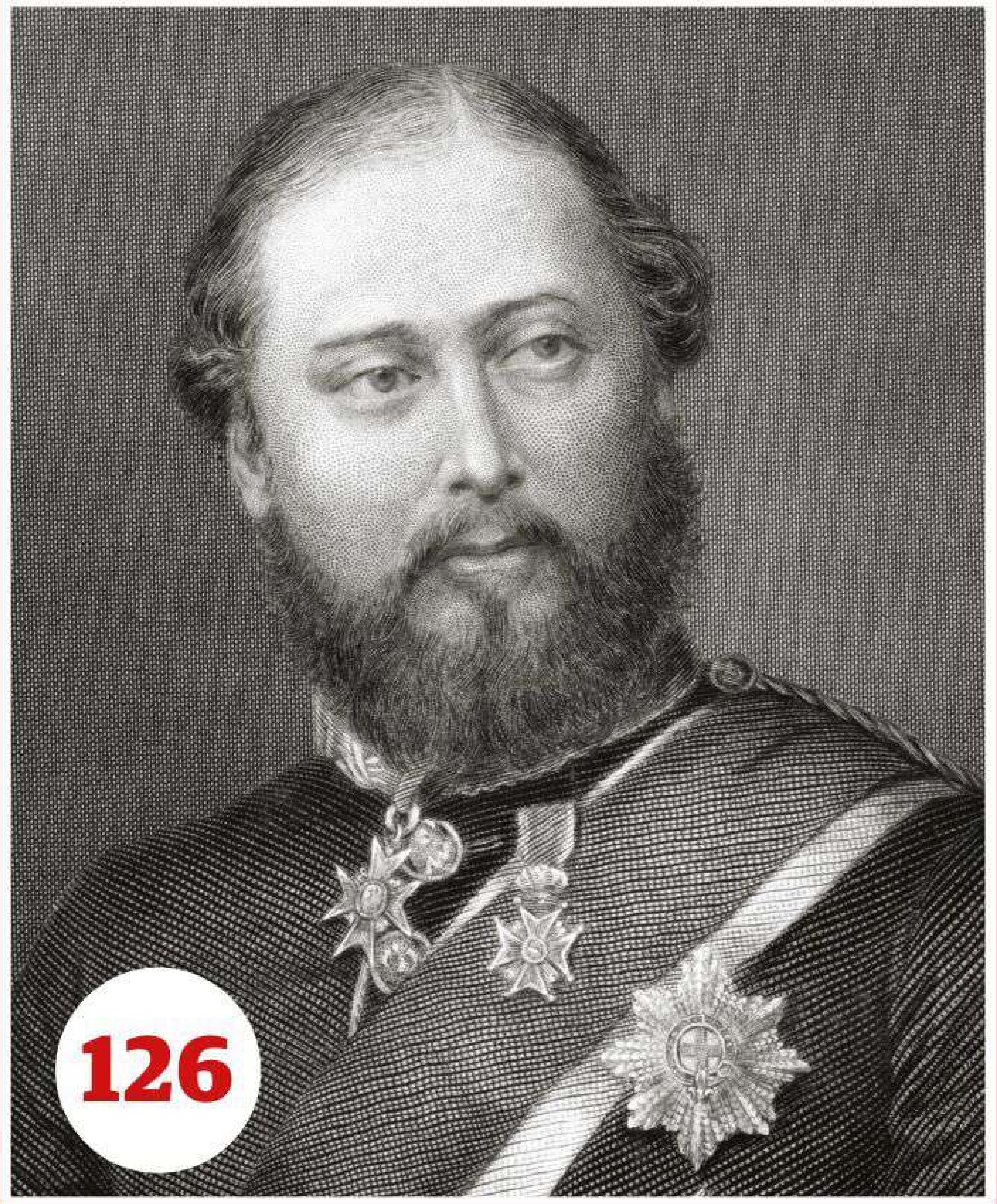

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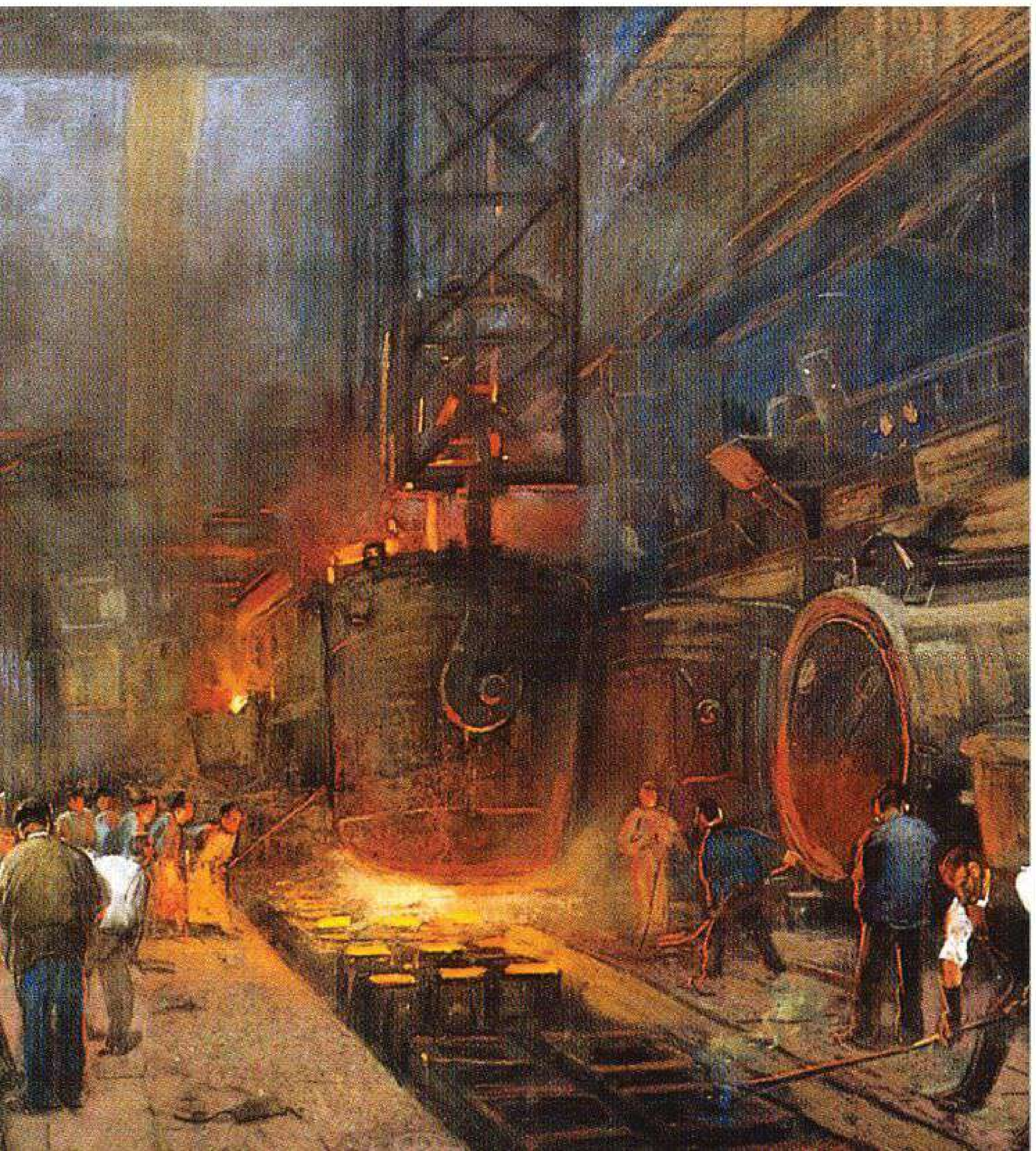
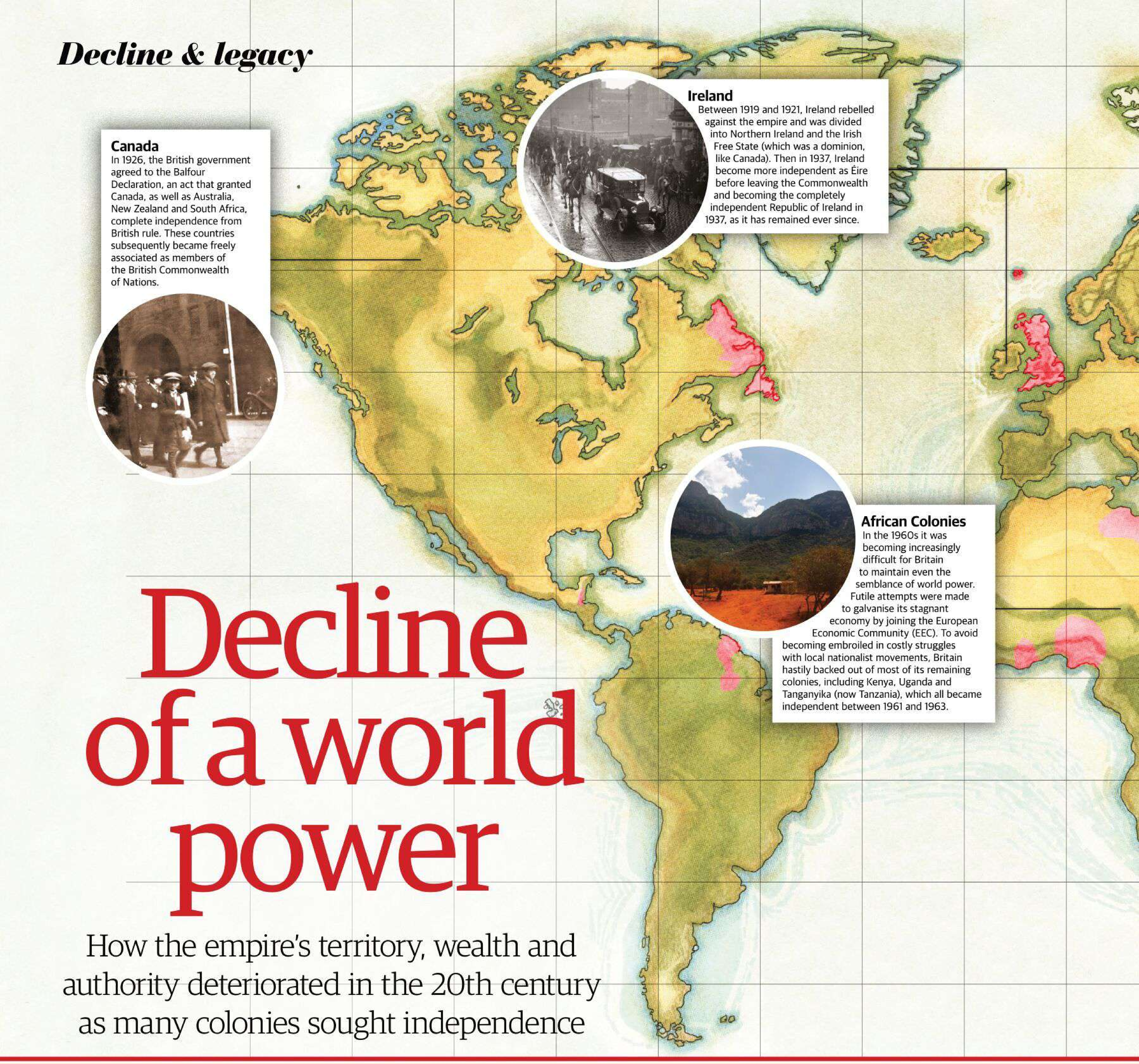


Decline of a world power

How the empire's territory, wealth and authority deteriorated in the 20th century as many colonies sought independence



Canada
In 1926, the British government agreed to the Balfour Declaration, an act that granted Canada, as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, complete independence from British rule. These countries subsequently became freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Ireland
Between 1919 and 1921, Ireland rebelled against the empire and was divided into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State (which was a dominion, like Canada). Then in 1937, Ireland become more independent as Éire before leaving the Commonwealth and becoming the completely independent Republic of Ireland in 1937, as it has remained ever since.

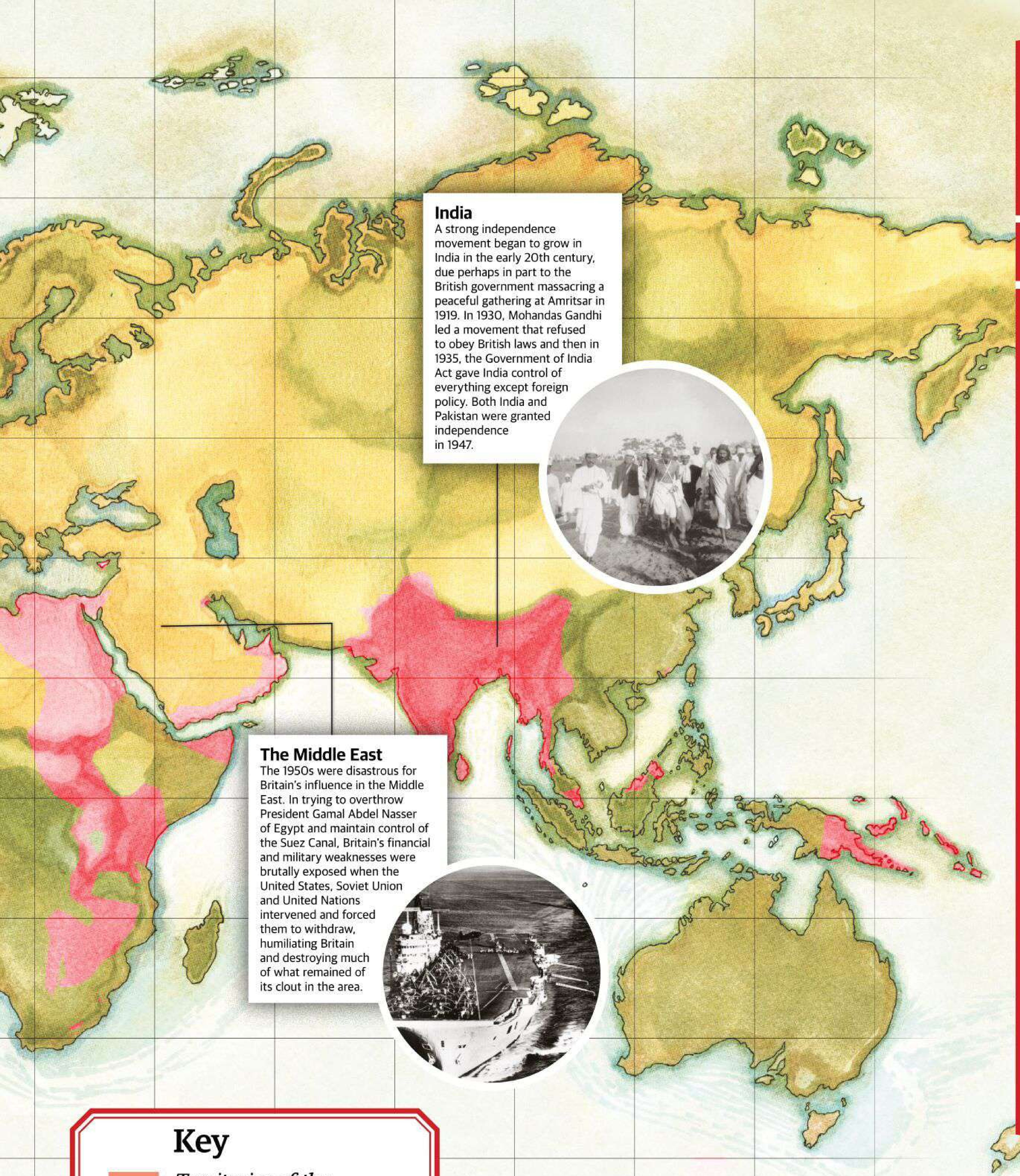
African Colonies
In the 1960s it was becoming increasingly difficult for Britain to maintain even the semblance of world power. Futile attempts were made to galvanise its stagnant economy by joining the European Economic Community (EEC). To avoid becoming embroiled in costly struggles with local nationalist movements, Britain hastily backed out of most of its remaining colonies, including Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania), which all became independent between 1961 and 1963.

The decline of the British Empire took place largely in the early part of the 20th century. After World War I it became increasingly difficult for Britain to hold onto its empire as it no longer boasted the proud military and naval supremacy that it once did. The legacy of debt left behind after the World War I and II also meant that Britain was no longer able to financially support or afford an empire.

The catastrophic British defeats in Europe and Asia between 1940 and 1942 destroyed its financial and economic independence – the foundation of the empire – and erased the old balance of power on which British security largely depended. Although Britain was one of the victorious nations in World War II, the downfall of Germany had come mainly as a result of Britain's American and Soviet allies. So while territory of the British Empire that was threatened during the war was successfully recovered, its prestige, authority and wealth had been severely dented.

Another factor in the decline of the British Empire was that Britain no longer had the right to rule people that did not want to be ruled. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 promoted the right for countries to rule themselves, and for Britain to be seen to support this principle in countries outside the empire and not within was contradictory. Not long afterwards, Ireland rebelled and was split in two – with Northern Ireland continuing to be British and what would become the Republic of Ireland being completely independent. Other countries to break away included Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, all coming as a result of the 1926 Balfour Declaration.

The decline of the British Empire continued into the 1930s and 40s as non-cooperative movements in India refused to obey British laws. During the reinvention of the Commonwealth in the wake of India's independence, Britain accepted the need to let some of its most valuable colonies become self-governing and then independent, but wasted vast amounts of money on thwarting anti-colonial revolts



India

A strong independence movement began to grow in India in the early 20th century, due perhaps in part to the British government massacring a peaceful gathering at Amritsar in 1919. In 1930, Mohandas Gandhi led a movement that refused to obey British laws and then in 1935, the Government of India Act gave India control of everything except foreign policy. Both India and Pakistan were granted independence in 1947.

The Middle East

The 1950s were disastrous for Britain's influence in the Middle East. In trying to overthrow President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and maintain control of the Suez Canal, Britain's financial and military weaknesses were brutally exposed when the United States, Soviet Union and United Nations intervened and forced them to withdraw, humiliating Britain and destroying much of what remained of its clout in the area.

Decline of an empire

Some of the losses in the decline of Britain's colonial supremacy

TERRITORY GAINED + OR LOST? −

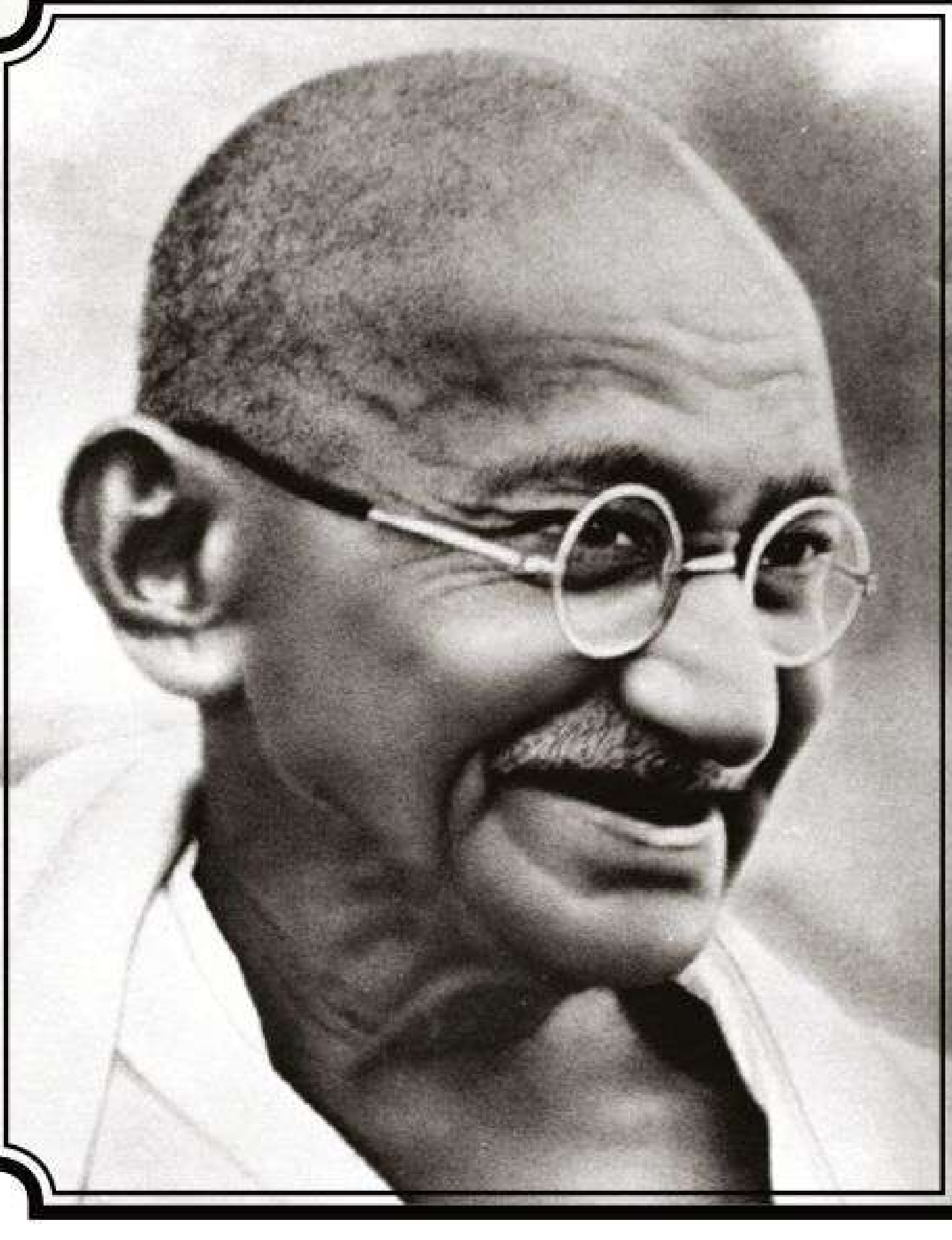
1922	−	IRELAND
1922	−	EGYPT
1931	−	SOUTH AFRICA
1942	−	AUSTRALIA
1947	−	INDIA
1947	−	NEW ZEALAND
1948	−	PALESTINE
1956	−	SUEZ CANAL ZONE
1960	−	NIGERIA
1961	−	SIERRA LEONE
1961	−	KUWAIT
1962	−	UGANDA
1963	−	KENYA
1964	−	MALTA
1965	−	GAMBIA
1966	−	BARBADOS
1968	−	MAURITIUS
1970	−	FIJI
1973	−	BAHAMAS
1976	−	SEYCHELLES
1979	−	ST LUCIA
1982	−	ANTIGUA
1984	−	BRUNEI
1997	−	HONG KONG

Key

🟥 *Territories of the British Empire in 1945*

in Kenya and Cyprus. Britain's disastrous attempt to overthrow President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, with the aid of Israel and France, led to the Suez Crisis of 1956. The United Nations intervened and forced the three invading nations to withdraw, which was a humiliating blow. The empire continued to collapse throughout the 1960s when most African and Caribbean colonies achieved independence.

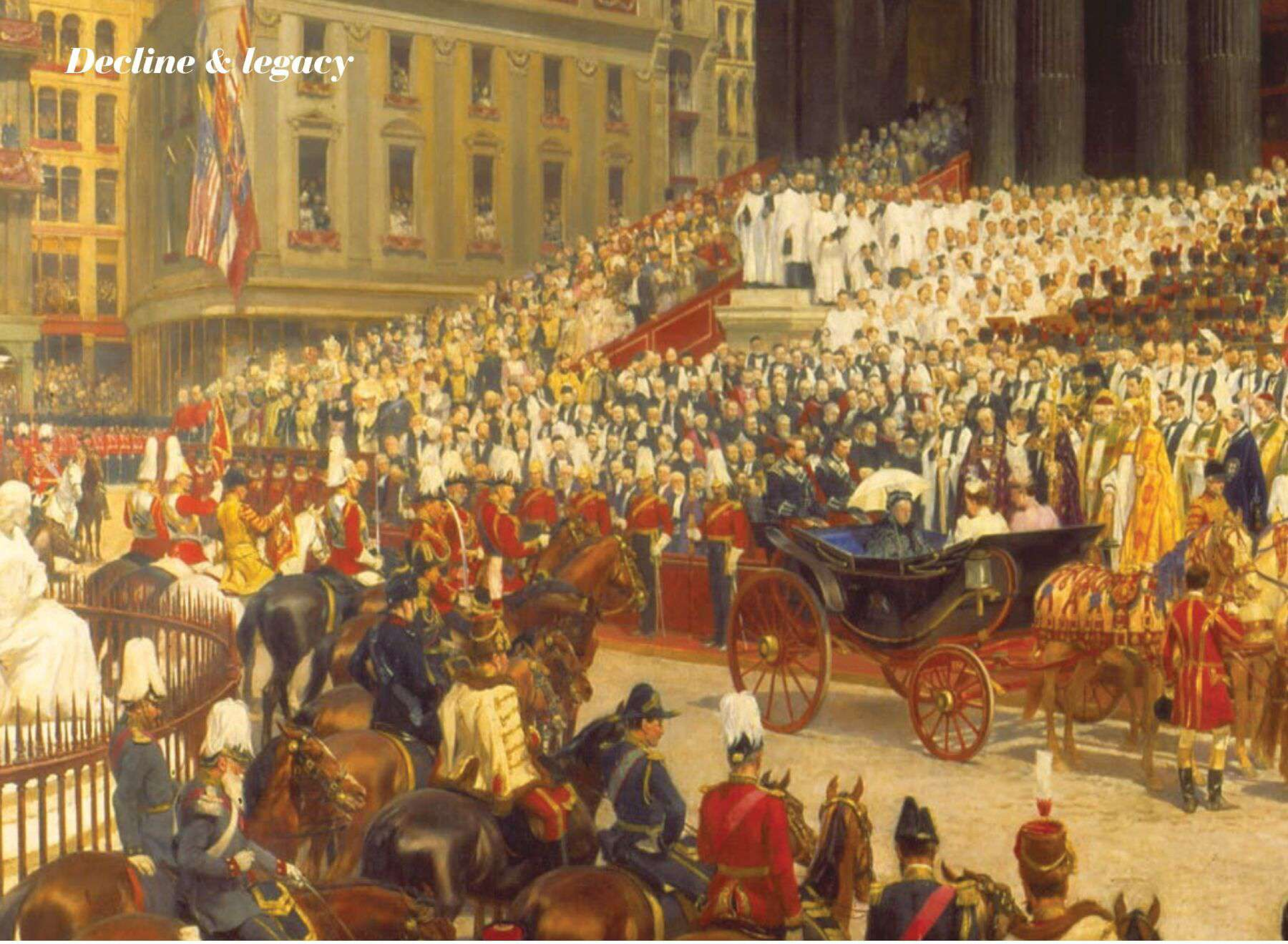
Despite the dismantlement of the empire, the impact it had on the world was prominent. The English language had spread all over the world and the newly independent countries nevertheless adopted Westminster-style parliamentary governments headed by Prime Ministers.



Influential figure
Mohandas Gandhi

1869-1948

Mohandas Gandhi was the leader of the movement that achieved independence for India from British rule in the 1940s. He famously led the Dandi Salt March in 1930, a non-violent protest and an act of civil disobedience against the British salt monopoly. Britain deemed this process illegal and used force to prevent it. Starting from Gandhi's base in Sabarmati Ashram, a group of 78 people began marching 240 miles to the village of Dandi, but the numbers increased as more Indian people joined the march along the way. It was a significant challenge to British authority and the peaceful demonstration inspired countless other movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

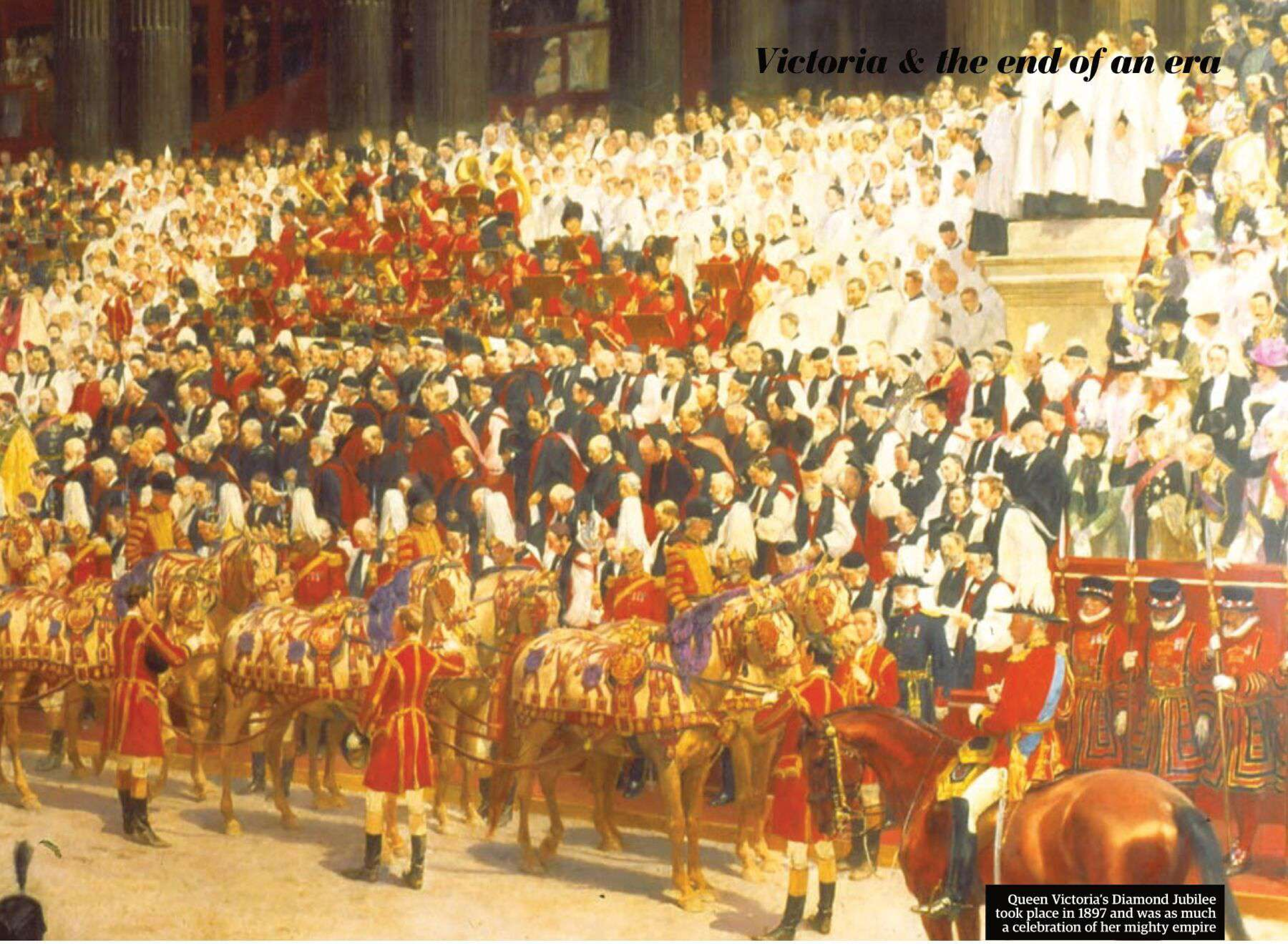


Victoria & the end of an era

After 63 years on the throne, Victoria's death left the nation pondering its own mortality. Having known no other leader, the nation's future felt uncertain...

A mass of black-clothed mourners waited to say their last goodbyes to the Queen who had served them devotedly for nearly 64 years – the longest of any British monarch. An eerie silence hung over them like a shroud as people bowed their heads in sorrow, some shaking with grief and others from the bitter cold. The only sound came from the clopping of horses' hooves and the muffled gun salutes fired in Hyde Park, as the gun carriage passed. At the sight of the Queen's coffin, it was as if a thousand mouths drew breath at once. Writer John Galsworthy described it as "a murmuring groan... So unconscious, so primitive, deep and wild... The Queen was dead, and the air of the greatest city upon Earth grey with unshed tears."

From inside the Queen's carriage, one of the two ladies-in-waiting, Edith, the Dowager Countess of Lytton, felt incredibly moved by the sight of the mourners. "The most heart and soul stirring thing I have seen," she wrote in a letter to her daughter. "[The Diamond] Jubilee can't compare with it to my mind because what was uppermost all the time was not the splendour of the show, but the intensity of loyal and devoted feeling, which seemed to fill every man and woman in


Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee took place in 1897 and was as much a celebration of her mighty empire

that enormous, monotonously black crowd." The country hadn't witnessed a state funeral since the death of the Duke of Wellington in 1852, so court officials closely examined the details of royal protocol and rights of precedence while arranging the funeral procession.

The Queen herself had left strict instructions, expressing that she wanted a 'white funeral', so London was draped with purple crepe – the colour of royalty – and white satin bows. Victoria wore a white dress and her wedding veil, despite wearing nothing but black for the 40 years she spent as the so-called Widow of Winchester. Numerous mementos were placed inside the coffin with her: Albert's dressing gown and a plaster cast of his hand, jewellery, photographs as well as a picture of her good friend and faithful servant John Brown, a lock of his hair and his mother's wedding ring – Victoria's physician Sir James Reid saw to it that these last few items were concealed from the family's view. It was to be a military funeral, with eight white horses and a white and gold satin pall over her coffin. The carriage drive through the capital came to an end at Paddington Station, in preparation for the final stage to Windsor. But it was at Windsor where the long journey to the Queen's final resting place faltered. While waiting for the funeral procession to begin once more, the artillery horses grew restless. They reared and kicked, proving unable to draw the gun carriage, so the naval guard of honour quickly made alternative arrangements. A communication cord was turned into an impromptu harness and the sailors on guard at the station pulled the Queen's funeral carriage instead. Ever since that day, it became a tradition for sailors to pull the coffin along the processional route in State funerals.

The service took place at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, in a private ceremony with the new King, Edward VII, the Queen's family and royalty from around the world. Victoria had 37 great-grandchildren, whose marriages with other monarchies earned her the name the 'grandmother of Europe'.

After lying in state for two days, the Queen was finally buried next to Albert at the Frogmore Mausoleum at Windsor Great Park. Throughout her long widowhood, she had always maintained her desire to be with him again. Shortly before he died, Albert reassured her: "We don't know in what state we shall meet again; but that we shall recognise each other and be together in eternity I am perfectly certain." And above the Mausoleum door was inscribed Victoria's words: "Farewell best beloved, here at last I shall rest with thee, with thee in Christ I shall rise again."

The Queen was 81 when she died, making her longest reigning monarch. Before her, that accolade had belonged to her grandfather, King George III. Ten years of mental illness had forced him to retire from public life, but Victoria was strong throughout – so was the public's loyalty. This was never more apparent than at her Diamond Jubilee, where subjects from all parts of the empire assembled to celebrate, including 11 colonial prime ministers. There was a sense of imperial wonder as Victoria journeyed through London; she later wrote in her journal: "No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those six miles

Victoria instructed Dr Reid to place a photo of John Brown as well as items belonging to Albert in her coffin of streets… The cheering was quite deafening and every face seemed to be filled with real joy." Fast-forward four years and the news of the Queen's death had filled London with shock and sadness. When the government and her family got wind of her illness, the news was deliberately withheld from the public for over a week. It was a testament to the impact she had had since her ascension to the throne, at a time when the Crown was tarnished by the public scandals of her predecessors. Victoria was the only child of Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg and Edward Duke of Kent and became queen at just 18 years old. Her uncle George IV and his brothers, the Duke of Clarence and the Duke of Kent (Victoria's father), were bigamists and fathered many children out of wedlock, causing public outrage. The Reform Act of 1932 had passed the powers of the monarch to Parliament, and there were even calls to abolish the royal institution completely, but Victoria won the people's loyalty against all odds.

In 1840, she married her cousin Albert Saxe-Coburg and over 17 years she had given birth to four boys and five girls. Paintings and photographs of the devoted couple surrounded by their brood appealed to the family values of the growing

Queen Victoria was named 'grandmother of Europe' after her great-grandchildren married European monarchs

> "The sailors on guard at the station pulled the Queen's funeral carriage… Ever since that day, it became a tradition for sailors to pull the coffin… in State funerals"

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.
Dedicated to the School Children of Toronto in Commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, June 22nd, 1897.
1837 DIAMOND JUBILEE 1897
FESTIVAL CHORUS OF THE TORONTO SCHOOL CHILDREN.
EXHIBITION PARK, JUNE 22ND, 1897.

This poster advertised Diamond Jubilee celebrations taking place in Toronto, Canada

Timeline of Queen Victoria's life

A future Queen is born
Alexandrina Victoria is born at Kensington Palace to Edward Duke of Kent and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Saalfeld-Coburg. When her father dies the following January, she becomes heir to the throne.
24 May 1819

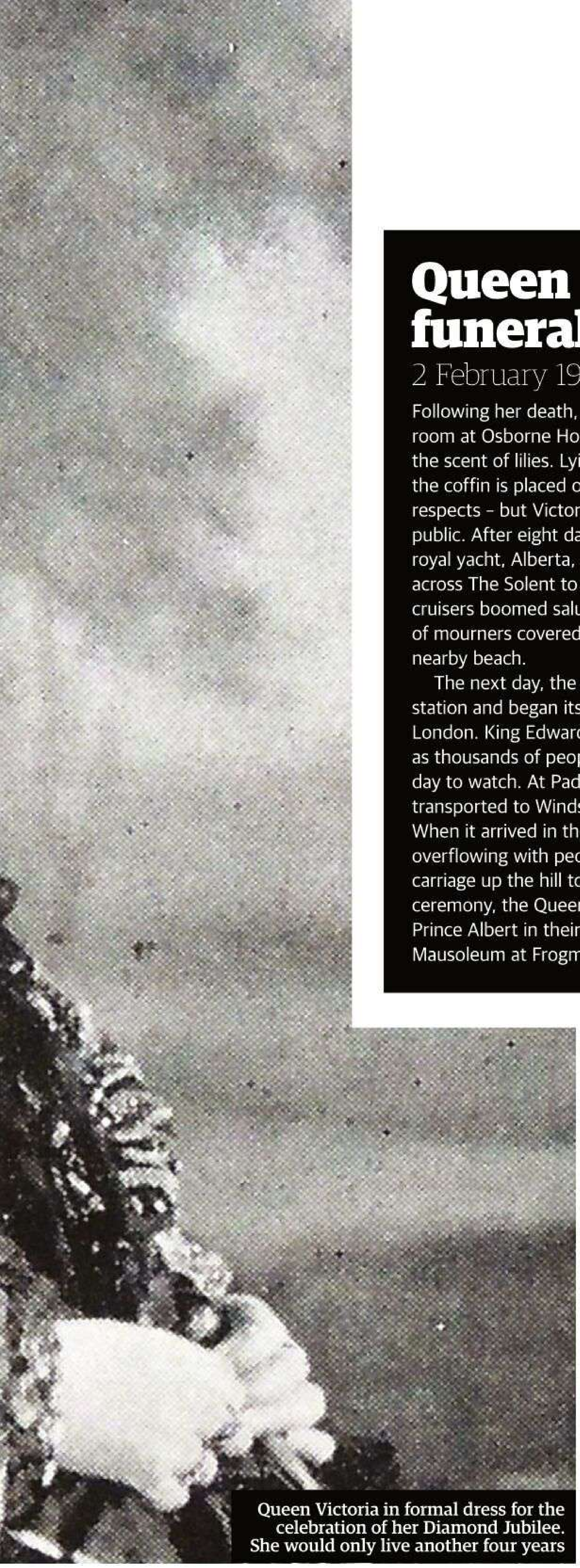
Coronation
A year after the death of King William IV, Princess Victoria becomes Queen. At just 19 years old, she was crowned at Westminster Abbey and 400,000 visitors travel to London to witness it. Shouts of "God save the Queen" ring through the air.
28 June 1838

The Big Day
When the Queen marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, it marked the first wedding of a reigning Queen in England since Bloody Mary almost 300 years before. The ceremony is held at the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace.
10 February 1840

First child
The happily married couple welcome their first born child into the world, Victoria Adelaide Mary Louisa (known as Vicky). She would marry Prince Frederik William of Prussia and become Empress of Germany.
21 November 1840

The Great Exhibition
Prince Albert is the brains behind this event in the purpose-built Crystal Palace in London, celebrating the great advances of the British industrial age. The profits would go into establishing the South Kensington museums complex in London.
1851

Prince Consort
The Royal couple have their ninth child, Princess Beatrice, and this same year, Albert is formally recognised by the nation when he is awarded the title of the Prince Consort.
1857



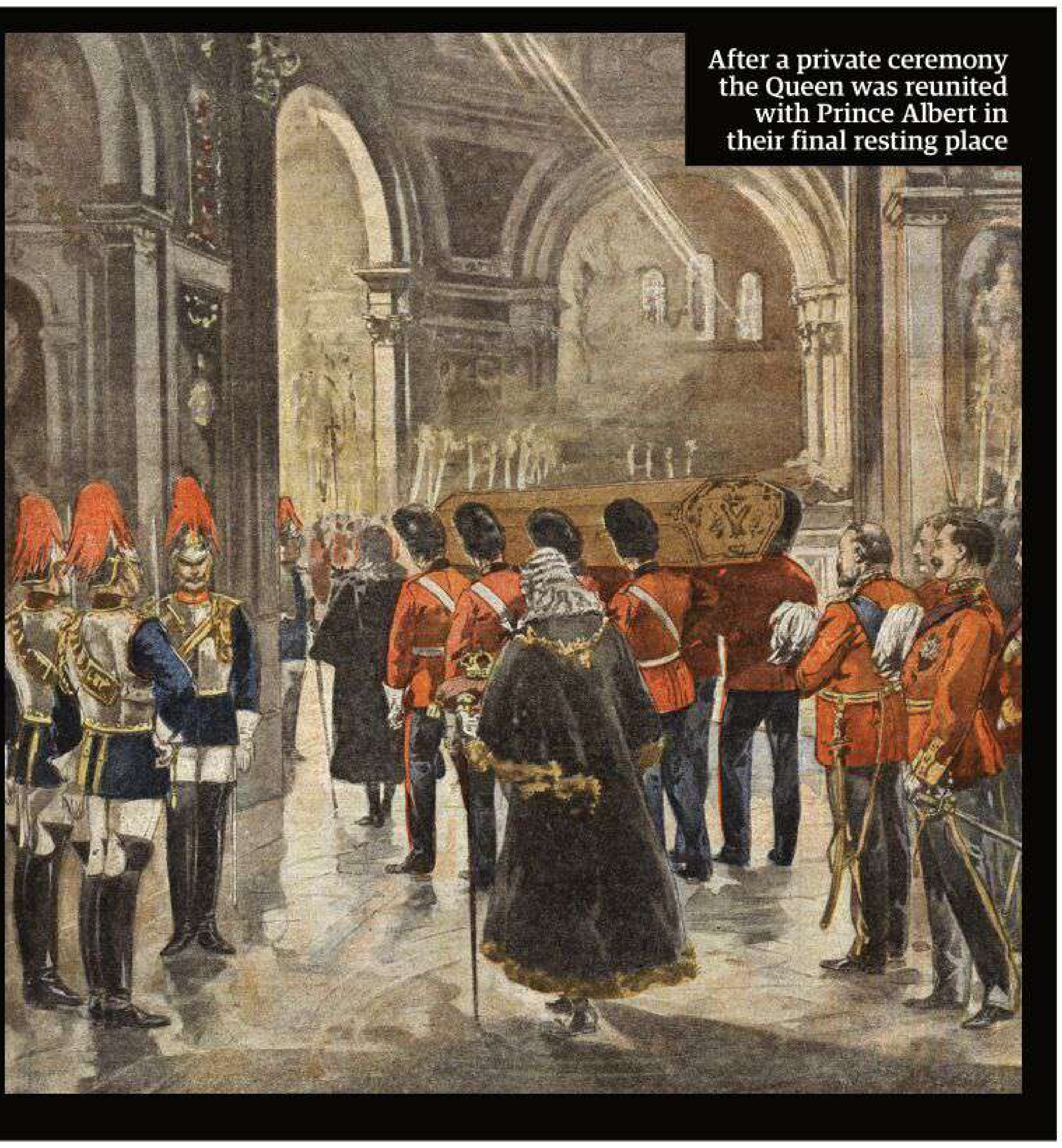
Queen Victoria in formal dress for the celebration of her Diamond Jubilee. She would only live another four years

Queen Victoria's funeral

2 February 1901

Following her death, the Queen lay in state in the dining room at Osborne House, where the air was heavy with the scent of lilies. Lying in state is a tradition where the coffin is placed on view so the public can pay their respects – but Victoria requested that it would not be public. After eight days, her coffin was taken to the royal yacht, Alberta, on 1 February 1901. It journeyed across The Solent to Portsmouth, while battleships and cruisers boomed salutes on either side and vast crowds of mourners covered the Southsea Common and the nearby beach.

The next day, the coffin was taken by train to Victoria station and began its procession by gun carriage across London. King Edward VII and the Kaiser led the way, as thousands of people braved the bitter winter's day to watch. At Paddington station, the coffin was transported to Windsor – the last leg of the journey. When it arrived in the afternoon, the town was overflowing with people. Here, sailors pulled the gun carriage up the hill to St George's Chapel. After a private ceremony, the Queen was reunited with her beloved Prince Albert in their final resting place: the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore.



After a private ceremony the Queen was reunited with Prince Albert in their final resting place

middle class, while having legitimate children also assured the royal line, which her predecessors had failed to do. That's not to say everyone liked her and, in fact, there were seven assassination attempts during her reign. Popularity also took a downturn when Prince Albert died and, in her all-consuming grief, she was seen as neglecting her duties to her subjects. What was the point of a monarchy who had seemed to disappear before their eyes?

After almost a decade of isolation, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli urged Victoria to begin making public appearances again, and by the time of her Golden Jubilee in 1887, she had regained the respect and love of her country and overseas. In 1857, the government of India was transferred to the United Kingdom following the Indian Rebellion and in 1877 Victoria was given the title Empress of India. Celebrations were held in Delhi, led by Viceroy of India Lord Lytton, who presented the Indian princes with their own coats of arms and read a telegraph that had come from Victoria herself. These grand festivities marked Britain's imperial status as a global force to be reckoned with.

Prince Albert was her first cousin. They met on her 17th birthday and she proposed on their second meeting

Her long reign saw Britain became an empire on which the sun never set. Queen Victoria was seen as having played an active role and towns, rivers and cities were named after her; such was the sense of national pride in their matriarchal

- **Prince Albert dies**
Aged just 42, Prince Albert dies of typhoid fever. In her journal, the Queen recalls the depths of her despair. When he is buried nine days later, she is too grief-stricken to attend the funeral. Victoria is lost in a period of mourning, which is expected to last 12 months, but continues for many more years.
14 December 1861

- **First public appearance**
The Queen abandons her public duties following the death of her husband. She doesn't appear publicly until 1863, when she unveils a statue of Albert in Aberdeen.
13 October 1863

- **New friendships**
The mid-1960s see Victoria gain a close friend in Scottish servant John Brown. He was rough, enjoyed a drink and treated the Queen surprisingly informally. He was even overheard calling her "woman"!
1866

- **Empress of India**
After catastrophic moves made by the East India Company spark mutiny, Britain seizes control of India. Prime Minister Disraeli swiftly secures the title Empress of India for his beloved queen.
1877

- **The Golden Jubilee**
The Queen celebrates 50 years with a quiet breakfast under the trees at Frogmore, the resting place of Prince Albert. She then travels to London for a royal banquet and on the following day, leads a procession through the city.
1887

- **The Diamond Jubilee**
The 60th anniversary is celebrated with a thanksgiving service outside St Paul's, as the Queen is too frail to climb the steps. Crowds of people flood the streets and Victoria wrote of the event in her journal: "I was much moved."
1897

- **Victoria dies**
The Queen dies at her estate, Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight. Victoria is 81 years old and has served as Queen for almost 64 years. She dies surrounded by her children and grandchildren.
22 January 1901

© Getty

> "For many, Victoria's death symbolised the decline of the empire, but… People from all across the empire would celebrate being part of it"

figurehead. When she died, the great Victorian age died with her, as *The Times* wrote: "to write the life of Queen Victoria is to relate the history of Great Britain during a period of great events… An unexampled national prosperity."

It wasn't just her home nation that was left numb from the shock of her death. In Bahrain, India, the Victoria Memorial Hospital was opened, largely financed by the British Indian merchants who wanted to show their appreciation for the free trade and peace enjoyed under British protection during her reign. In Canada, the people went into mourning. *The Mail and Empire* newspaper in Toronto wrote: "The private and personal concern was more touching than any public or ceremonial expression of grief. It showed, as no ceremony could, how near the Queen was to the hearts of her people, and how the thought of her had become part of the routine of life." Flags hung at half-mast and shop windows were draped in black.

> Victoria's popularity took a blow after Prince Albert's death, as she began to neglect her duties. But by 1887 she was back

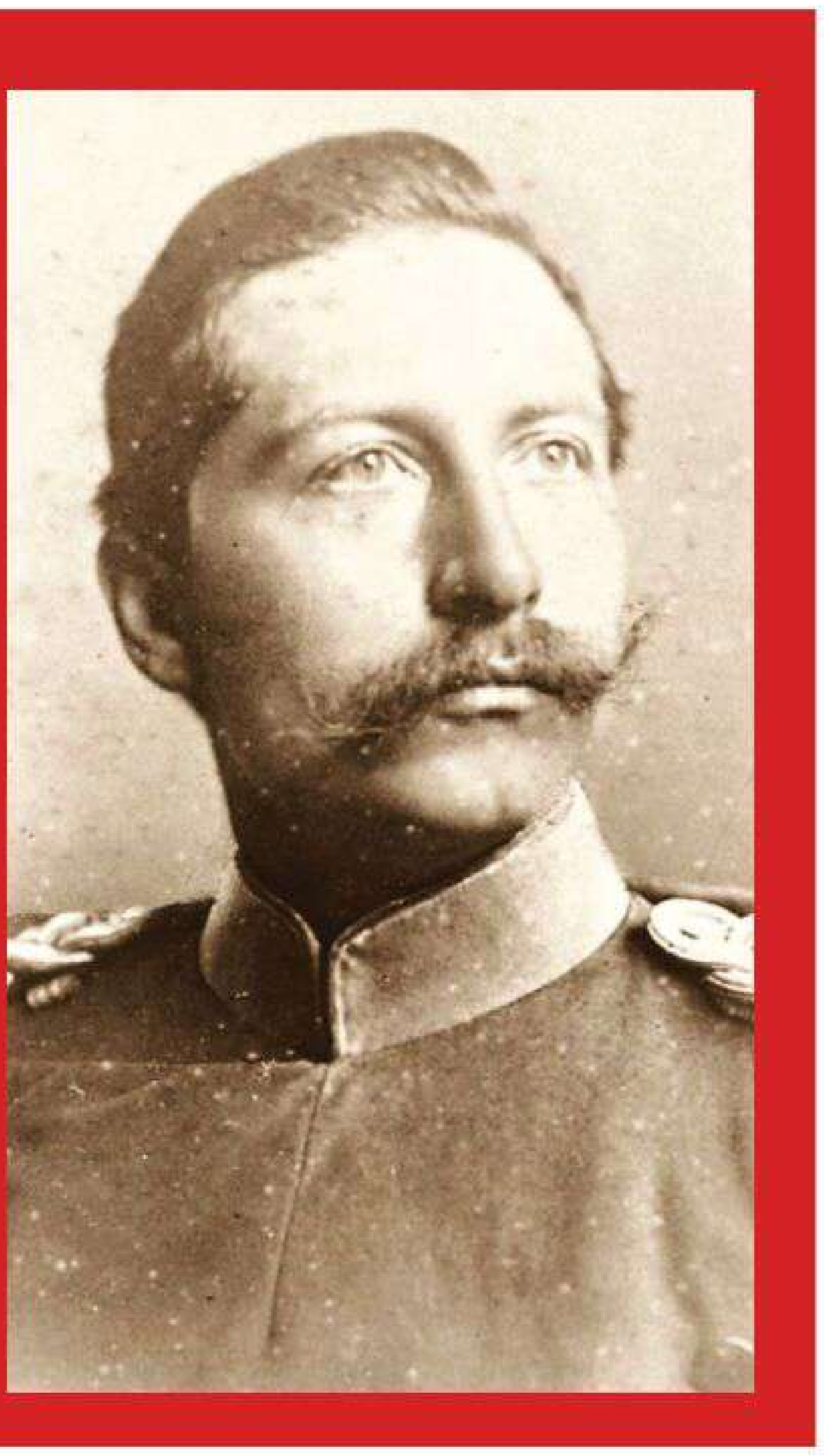
The Queen was called the Mother of Confederation after Canada became a unified state on 1 July 1867. "I believe it will make [the provinces] great and prosperous", she told Sir Charles Tupper, one of the principal fathers of Confederation. Main roads in Canadian communities were named after her and the Queen's Birthday became a national holiday. Becoming known as Victoria Day in 1901, it is still celebrated in memory of the great Queen. John Diefenbaker, the 13th prime minister of Canada, recalled the day of her death in his memoirs: "When Queen Victoria died, Father regarded it as one of the most calamitous events of all time. Would the world ever be the same? I can see him now. When he came home to tell us the news, he broke down and cried."

On the other side of the world, Australia wept too. Like Britain, Australia had experienced population growth and an increase in wealth during her time, so Victoria was well-loved. On 9 July 1900, she had declared the Commonwealth of Australia to come into being on 1 January 1901, unifying the Australian colonies. She died shortly after the celebrations, at the height of her popularity. "Millions who have never seen the face of the dead Queen honour and revere her memory throughout the length and breadth of the entire civilised world," read the next day's announcement in the *Herald*, an Australian

Kaiser Wilhelm II strides his way through Queen Victoria's funeral on his white horse

Kaiser Wilhelm

A man at war with himself

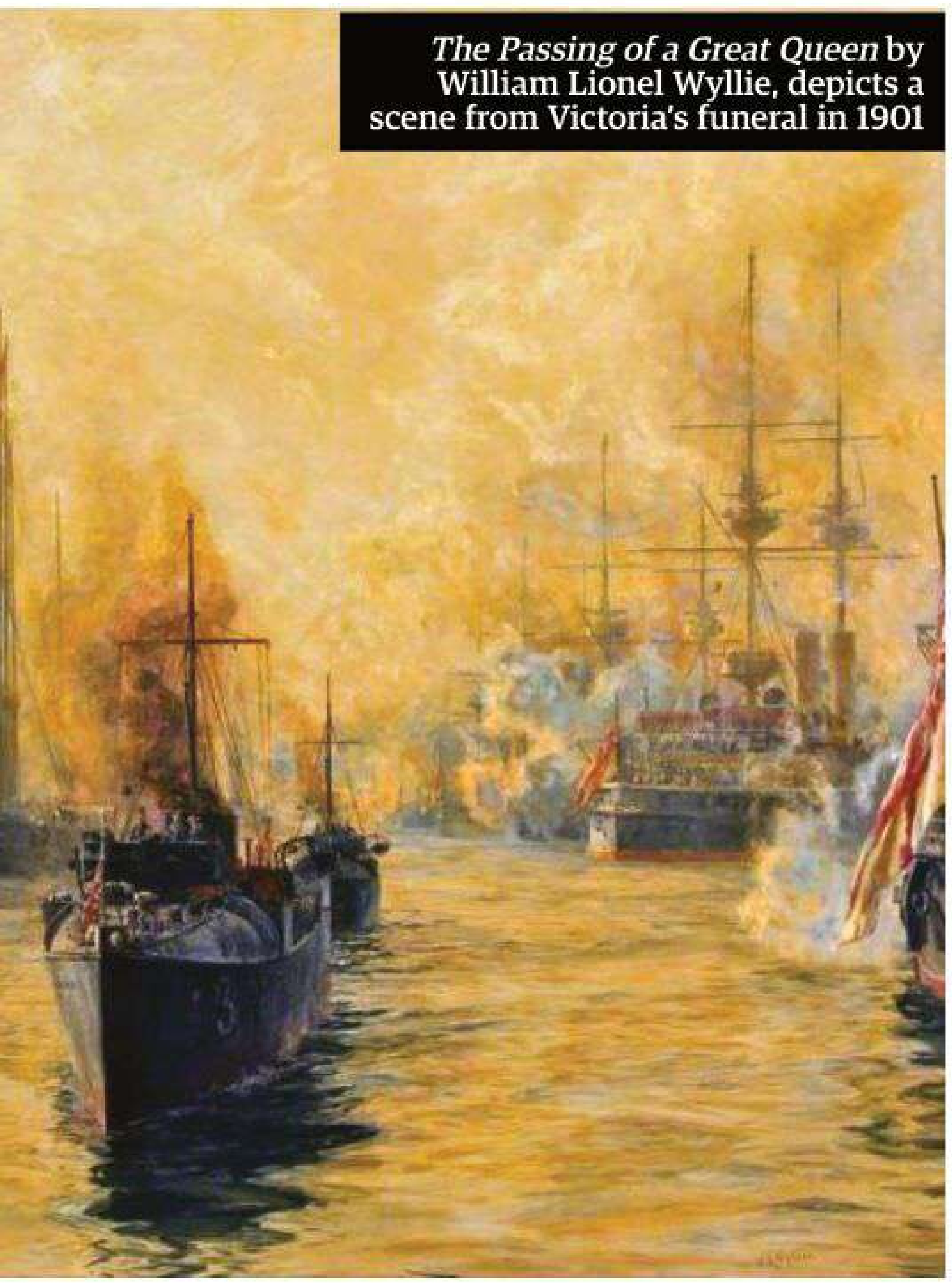


The son of Queen Victoria's eldest daughter Vicky, Kaiser Wilhelm II was meant to be the heir that would strengthen the bonds between Britain and Germany. Instead, he ended up forging such a love-hate relationship with the nation, that he would declare war.

A difficult birth had left him with a paralysed left arm and stunted growth that Princess Vicky was determined to cure. From having his arm inserted to freshly slaughtered hare to daily electrotherapy treatments, the Kaiser was forced to endure a tormented childhood. By the age of 16, he had developed a twisted love for his mother. Uncovered letters revealed fantasies about kissing her hand in an erotic fashion, which some historians believe was his desperate plea for acceptance. Her response talked about politics and music – anything but his fantasies – and he didn't reply. Their relationship was over and the Kaiser developed a hatred of his English roots.

When he started expanding the German navy, Britain started to worry. He gave an interview to *The Daily Telegraph* as an olive branch, but only made things worse when he let slip: "You English are mad, mad, mad as March hares."

Following World War One, Kaiser Wilhelm was forced to abdicate on 9 November 1918, fleeing the country with his family to live out his days in Holland.



The Passing of a Great Queen by William Lionel Wyllie, depicts a scene from Victoria's funeral in 1901

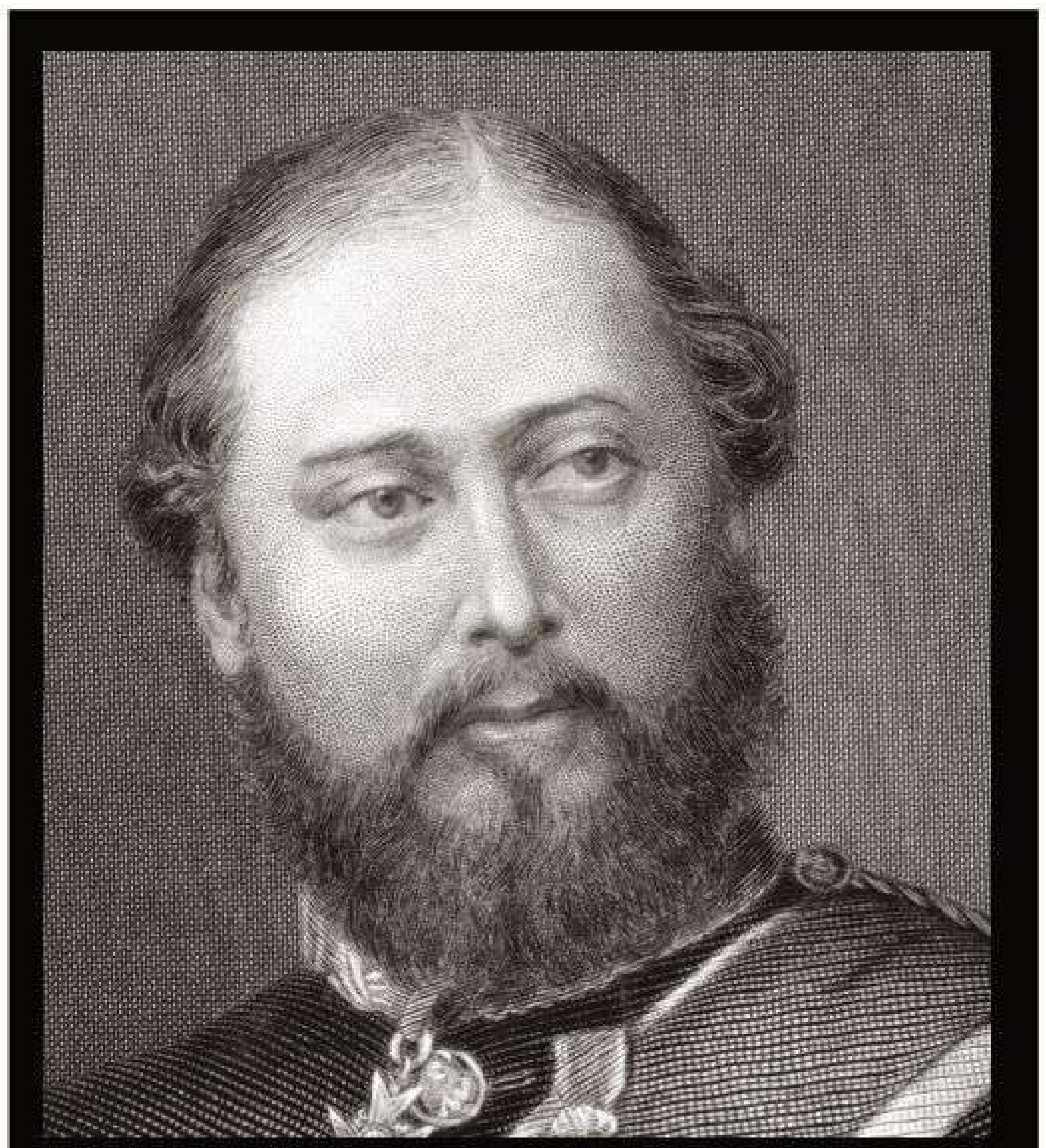
newspaper. "In all stages of her history the imaginations were captured. Whether as Virgin Queen, or happy wife and mother or afflicted widow, Queen Victoria has appealed to us all as a great queen and a noble woman." In Australia, the names given to two colonies during the 19th century – Victoria and Queensland – were retained even after they achieved statehood, but the link between Australia and Britain was beginning to show signs of weakening.

For many, Victoria's death would become symbolic of the British Empire's decline, and for more than 50 years after her demise, people from all across the empire would celebrate being a part of it. This occasion was known as Empire Day and – according to New Zealand newspaper *Oamaru Mail* on the eve of their first celebration – it served "the dual purpose of keeping fresh and green the memory of a most illustrious reign and rejoicing in the consolidation of our great Empire." School children would sing songs like *Jerusalem* and *God Save The Queen*, listen to stories about brave warriors and pioneers from across the empire and then leave school early to join marches, maypole dances and parties. One New Zealand school journal from 1922 contained a poem that summed up the event nicely: "Our Union Jack, on Empire Day, floats proudly in the breeze; not here alone, but far away, in lands across the seas. Wherever British children dwell, or British folk may be, on Empire Day our flag shall tell that we are Britons free..." In Australia, the festivities were more commonly known as Cracker Night, which was celebrated with bonfires and fireworks.

However, as the empire began to weaken in the 1950s and countries started to revel in their own identity, this anniversary fell out of favour. It was later re-branded as Commonwealth Day, and the date was changed from 24 May to the second Monday in March. Queen Elizabeth II still sends a special message to the countries of the Commonwealth via radio broadcast on this date. In a recent address, she warned that "when common goals fall apart, so does the exchange of ideas. And if people no longer trust or understand each other, the talking will soon stop too," she continued. "Not only are there tremendous rewards for this cooperation, but through dialogue we protect ourselves against the dangers that can so easily arise from a failure to talk or to see the other person's point of view." And there was certainly a lack of dialogue and understanding between England and Germany when the frosty relationship between the two rulers led to an intense rivalry that would steer them towards the Great War.

When Edward VII died in 1910, his funeral was a parade of royalty from all over Europe and was the last of its kind. The nine reigning European kings assembled at Buckingham Palace looking unified in their military regalia and extravagant facial hair. It would have seemed to anyone that blood was thicker than bombs, but that illusion was soon shattered. By 1914, three crowned cousins were at war, with King George V of Great Britain and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia on one side, and the German Kaiser on the other in a conflict that would leave only four of the nine kings still on their thrones.

While the Kaiser signed the papers sanctioning mobilisation of the German armed forces, he lamented: "To think George and Nicky (the Tsar) should have played me for false! If my grandmother had been alive, she would never have allowed it."



Edward VII

The playboy Prince of Wales

The eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert was known to his family as Bertie. He was also known as a disappointment. His poor performance during home tutoring and interest in eating, drinking and women earned him a reputation as a playboy prince. Victoria even remarked: "Handsome I cannot think him, with that painfully small and narrow head, those immense features and total want of chin."

Their relationship became even more fraught when Albert visited his son at Cambridge and went for a walk in the rain. He returned sick, bed-bound and dead within three weeks. It was probably due to typhoid, but Edward's mother forever blamed him for her beloved's death. "I never can or shall look at him without a shudder," she wrote. Consequently, when he became the King, he had never received an ounce of wisdom or preparation for the job from his dear mother.

Despite playing a role in the lead-up to World War I – by expanding the Royal Navy to compete with Germany – the Edwardian period is seen as an age of peace and prosperity, especially for the upper class.

> "Handsome I cannot think him, with that painfully small and narrow head"

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Pathway to independence

In the wake of Queen Victoria's death, the strength and stability of the British Empire started to fracture and the cracks of decolonisation began to weaken its grip on the world

Within a few centuries, Great Britain had risen from a set of warring principalities to become a behemoth of economic and military might. For a small kingdom in the cold grip of the Atlantic Ocean, the world stood and bowed for what seemed like millennia, but the absolute nature of its power was beginning to shift. The world outside Britain's many colonies and borders was changing significantly around it – most notably, the rise of a new future superpower, a once former colony that had fought for its independence – and was now transforming into a new realm of politics, agriculture and industry.

When Queen Victoria, the last monarch of the House of Hanover, passed away at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, a shockwave was felt across the furthest reaches of the empire. Her death was more than just a political issue: it was the symbolic end of Great Britain's prominence on the world stage. Without its iconic and resolute figurehead to guide it, the British Empire was suddenly in question. By 1851, Great Britain had been dubbed the 'workshop of the world', but the ever-changing world outside the empire had come knocking.

> While the empire was built over centuries, it only took around 52 years (1945-1997) for it to be dismantled completely

The empire had dominated with its monolithic Royal Navy, but its once great military might was now in far greater company. The diminutive empire (by comparison) of nearby Germany and the growing presence of the United States of America across the Atlantic led to military tension; that tension eventually led to one of the most catastrophic wars ever known, and so the empire found itself struggling to survive in a world that was shrinking rapidly. Colonies once satisfied with their semi-autonomy sensed the failing of its grip and each one began to tear itself from the empire's once formidable whole.

"Without its iconic and resolute figurehead to guide it, the British Empire was suddenly in question"

Crowds gather to celebrate the handover of Hong Kong - the last vestige of British colonial power in Asia - to China

The programme bolstered each nation's air force capabilities for decades to come

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

Sometimes referred to rather simply as 'the Plan', the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was an aircrew and pilot training programme that was responsible for educating more than half the pilots who took to the skies to defend the Allied cause in World War II. Not only did programme and the skills it gave its graduates have a huge impact on the outcome of the war, it also saw one of the most successful collaborations between Britain and some of the biggest colonies in the empire. Running the entire length of the war from 1939 to 1945, BCATP saw the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm (FAA), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) conducting training programmes across the Commonwealth to train aircrew and pilots to the skill level required to operate in wartime. The programme saw Australia train 37,500 personnel by the end of the war, Canada trained 131,500 (many of whom went on to serve in both the RAF and the RCAF) and New Zealand skilled up 2,743 pilots who flew missions in Europe, Africa and beyond.

As Great Britain tentatively stepped into the 20th century, blinded by the bright light of a brave new era, it found itself in a world that was experiencing profound metamorphosis. Queen Victoria's death on 22 January 1901 did more than just signal the end of Britain's industrial golden age: it immediately placed a question mark over the empire's political future on the world stage.

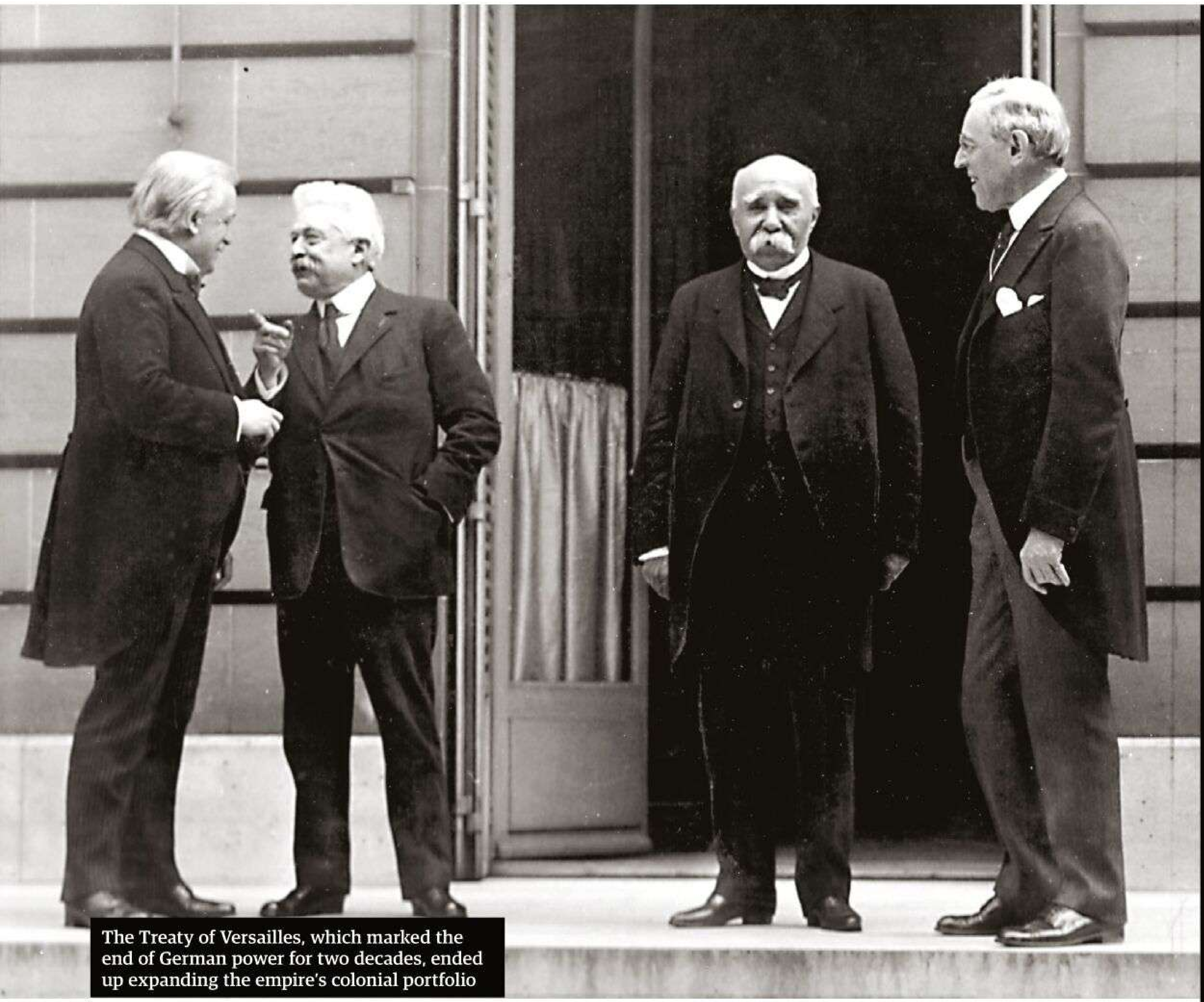
Even before the death of the queen, Germany was emerging as Britain's closest and most prominent rival. While growing in both industrial and military strength (such as the heavy expansion of the German Imperial Navy), Germany was not afraid of rattling the sabre in Britain's direction. It seemed almost unsurprising when the two nations plunged into war in 1914. It was a conflict on a scale the world had never even considered and the ferocity of its hunger would consume funds, resources and men from across these two vast empires. And so it would be the existence of colonies and dominions (self-governing colonies) on both sides that would play a significant role in the Great War (later known as World War I).

As the battle lines were drawn in 1914, over 2.5 million men were drafted from across the colonies of the British Empire, and their contribution to the war effort had a considerable impact. While Germany relied on help from its ally the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain drew on dominions such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and beyond. Such was the presence and impact of these armies in support of Great Britain and its allies France and Russia (over a quarter of those who gave their lives for Britain were not actually British) that prime minister David Lloyd George would invite every leader from these territories to join him in a special imperial council following the war in order to grant them greater influence over the future of the empire as a whole.

World War I was the brutal rite of passage that bloodied the empire into the 20th century proper, but for all the loss of life and terrible battles that linger in the mind a century later, the Great War only served to bolster imperial power and expansion. Signed in 1919, the Treaty of Versailles gutted Germany's military capabilities into nothingness and divvied up its foreign territories. The treaty saw Britain absorb an impressive 1.8 million square miles, including Iraq, Palestine and sections of Togo, Tanganyika and Cameroon.

Even in the face of the great swathes of decolonisation that would follow the next great global conflict, the dominions of the empire themselves expanded also – Australia gained control of Papua New Guinea while New Zealand was given Western Samoa. The end of World War I marked the final era of expansion for the British Empire, but the raising of glasses to victory and the king's good name would not be enough to stave off the dark tide of change that loomed on the horizon.

In the years between the two global wars of the 20th century, the empire's vast power base had already begun to crack. Pro-independence movements in both Ireland (the rise of political



The Treaty of Versailles, which marked the end of German power for two decades, ended up expanding the empire's colonial portfolio

movement Sinn Fein and the guerrilla tactics of the Irish Republican Army leading to the Anglo-Irish War, which ended in 1921 with the formation of a Free Irish State) and India (simmering tensions across the nation erupted, leading to the bloody Amritsar Massacre and the Chauri Chaura Incident, and would blight Indian colonial rule for the next quarter of a century) continued to undermine the empire's expansion.

Alongside autonomy for Egypt in 1932, the Imperial Conference in 1923 became a watershed moment for the dominions of the empire, with these states being granted full control over their own foreign policy. While Britain could certainly lean heavily on those nations to provide military assistance in the future, they were in no way obligated to comply. This resulted in Canada and South Africa refusing to provide troops during the Chanak Crisis (a brief war scare between Britain and Turkey in September 1922). So, by the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the empire still stood, but it no longer occupied the elevated seat of power it had held in the 1800s.

The years between the wars had been a slow burn of fragmentation for the empire, but World War II would change the future of its colonies forever. Throughout the conflict, but most notably between 1939 and 1941 when Britain and France stood alone against Hitler and the Nazi-controlled German war machine, the colonies and dominions became vital to the empire's war effort. Indian troops saw action in almost every theatre of war across the period, while the African colonies of Sierra Leone, West Africa, Gambia, Nigeria and the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana) all served as important military ports for the Allies.

The West Indies also contributed, but not without caveats. The top brass of the empire didn't consider it 'seemly' for black men to take up arms against white men, even if those white men wore the uniforms of the enemy, and this caused considerable agitation when West Indian men weren't called up for active service at the outbreak of war. A skill shortage in the RAF would eventually change this, but the new recruits found themselves paid considerably less than their British counterparts and were treated with all the

> Of the 53 member states that form the Commonwealth, only 16 now recognise the Queen as their head of state

Diary of a colonial soldier in WWI

Pulled into the grinding gears of the Great War, 17-year-old shoemaker's apprentice Josue Fraser is about to experience life serving the empire at arms

June 1914

Europe is on the brink of war, they say. People all across the city of Port-of-Spain are talking about it. I've lived here my entire life and I've never seen the place so talkative! A whole continent at war? My father says it'll never come to that, but I can see he's not convinced by his own sentiment.

August 1915

War really did break out. Britain and Germany at each other's throats. Apparently some old men in London didn't want West Indian men to join the war effort, but we want to do our duty. I'm 17 now, but I lied about my age and applied to the newly formed British West Indies Regiment anyway.

September 1915

We've just arrived in Seaford in a place called Sussex. The journey to Britain was horrible, choppy and cold, but we're all excited. We're going to be trained to join the British Army. We're going off to learn to fight the Germans and protect the empire! Looks like I've been assigned to B Company.

January 1916

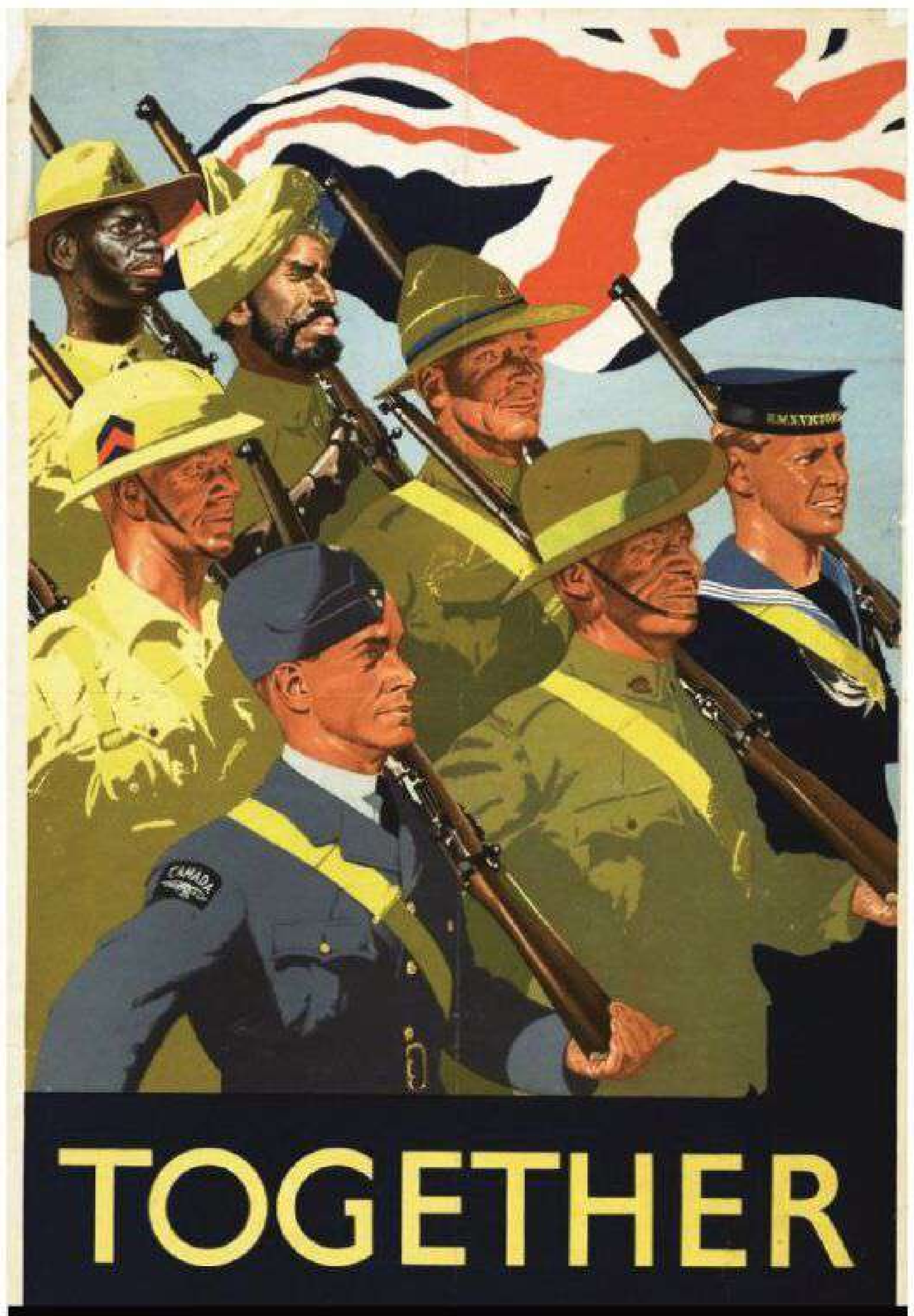
Looks like we won't be fighting the Germans. We've just arrived in Palestine and boy is it a scorcher. It's not like heat back home, it's a dry, dusty heat that dries everything out in a flash. We're going to be driving back Ottoman forces throughout the region. I still don't really understand why we're not fighting in France.

November 1916

The trenches are hell. The heat beats you down and the Ottomans don't ever seem to run out of bullets. The other regiments, the white men, don't like us being here, the officers especially. They expected us to all fall within a few weeks, but we're still here. He's my king, too. I won't fail. None of us will.

December 1918

We were pulled out of Palestine earlier in the year. I don't miss it. But we're all together and they've shipped us to Italy. It's a beautiful place, but tension with the white folk has reached boiling point. Almost 200 of us refused to work until we were paid better and treated with more respect. Most of us were disbanded and tried for mutiny, but there's talk of a Caribbean League to protect us. Maybe things will change...



This World War II poster emphasises the joint war effort with a depiction of soldiers from seven parts of the British Empire marching together

racial prejudice and special rules you'd expect prior to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

When the war came to a bloody and exhaustive end in 1945, the empire was in disarray. Britain had essentially been bankrupted by the six-year fight and was now reliant on a huge $4.33 billion loan from the United States (one it didn't repay in full until 2006), so it had nothing but a threadbare military and a resounding home resentment for any future conflict. For many, Britain needed to head home and heal its wounds, not continue to oversee a costly empire that was beginning to tire of its many collars and leashes. The people demanded change, and change would be had.

And so, decolonisation became the focus of domestic politics in Britain. The rise of Clement Atlee's pro-decolonisation Labour Party in 1945 saw the continuing unrest in India become a prime concern. British India (or the British Raj as it was also known) had remained an important acquisition for the empire, but it was never a peaceful one. Rebellions led to military backlash, which led to protests, riots and massacres. With the growing influence of peaceful activist Mohandas Gandhi calcifying those fragmented separatists into a single movement, India had become an unpopular symbol of colonialism – an archaic anchor that was holding Britain back from evolving into a nation befitting of the New World.

Civil war seemed imminent in India and Atlee, now prime minister, promised India would be granted full independence no later than 1948. India itself certainly wanted to be free of the shackles of British oppression, but it was not unified in that vision. The country was split by two political movements – the largely Hindu Indian National Congress and the Islamic Muslim League – which led Britain to organise a bisection of the country, creating a separate Islamic state known as Pakistan. With the dual nations formerly granted independence in August 1947, the catalyst for the British Empire's transformation was gaining speed.

Indian independence was not a clean break for Britain – its separation did prompt a sigh of relief at home, but it was a blow politically and brought the breadth of the empire's true power into further doubt. The affair with India was not an isolated incident either – across the world, unrest and strife peppered many a colony and dominion. The British Mandate of Palestine was one such chaotic locale; the influx of Jewish refugees following the wake of the Holocaust was causing tension among the Arab states, with a growing fear that a new Jewish

One of the first nations to break from Britain, Malaya would eventually join with ten other states to create Malaysia in 1963

"Indian independence was a blow politically and brought the breadth of the empire's true power into further doubt"

Defining moment

The Anglo-Irish War finally ends

11 July 1921

While Britain is attempting to stem rebellion in the increasingly splintered British Raj, a similar situation is occurring in Ireland. Rather than Hindus clashing with Muslims, the Emerald Isle is being torn apart by sectarian violence between Catholics and Protestants. However, there is one significant difference: the conflict has not only created a political party, Sinn Fein, which campaigns for Irish independence, but a military group known as the Irish Republican Army. The IRA fights the Irish War of Independence for two years before Ireland (or most of it, at least) is deemed a 'free state' by the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Defining moment

Statute of Westminster 1931

11 December 1931

For years the dominions of the empire have had some semblance of self-governance, but it isn't consistent across the empire and many of these 'Commonwealth nations' feel are little more than colonies on a larger scale. This issue especially rankles some of the bigger entities such as Australia and Canada, so it is clear Westminster has to act to ensure the future co-operation of the British Commonwealth. The Statute of Westminster, 1931, effectively makes any of the empire's dominions sovereign states, granting them legislative independence from Britain while still recognising the British monarch as head of state.

Disbanding the empire

1914

World War I begins
The British Empire (and eventually France and Russia) is forced into war against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The body count is so catastrophic it even eclipses the English Civil War, but many British colonies are still involved.
28 July 1914

Treaty of Versailles expands the empire
The defeat of Germany and the Central Powers sees the nation of the Kaiser brought low by a treaty that dismantles its military and divides its colonies between the victors. The British Empire (for the last time) expands considerably overseas.
28 June 1919

Indian non-cooperation movement ends
Opposition to the British Raj has been brewing in India since the 1800s, but sees a peaceful shift under the direction of Mohandas Gandhi. Supported by the Indian National Congress, the non-violent movement ends when citizens and policemen die during the Chauri Chaura Incident.
5 February 1922

Anglo-Egyptian Treaty signed
While Egypt has gained independence from the empire in the years prior, British troops have remained stationed in the country to ensure Britain doesn't lose a foothold in North Africa. To avoid a diplomatic incident, British troops are removed following a treaty signed with Egypt.
26 August 1936

World War II erupts
Two decades after the previously unthinkable Great War came to an end, Europe and the rest of the world are once again plunged into war. Much like in the conflict that came before it, the British Empire becomes distinctly reliant on colonial troops and pilots.
1 September 1939

state was to be erected right in the middle of their homelands. It was, in essence, a sociopolitical powder keg set to blow, and considering how damaging the road to Indian separation had been, Britain eventually withdrew all claim to Palestine in 1948 and left the matter in the hands of the United Nations.

Further problems for Britain and the empire were sprouting up in Africa and Asia as well, further spreading the virulent fever of decolonisation. British Malaya, a loose group of islands that would later go on to form modern-day Malaysia, was one of the empire's most profitable colonies thanks to its precious exports of rubber and tin. When Japan entered World War II, it invaded Malaya and occupied the region from 1942 to 1945. When the Japanese were eventually routed (by a mixture of American military offensives and guerrilla tactics used by anti-Japanese militias), Britain was quick to re-establish control.

Those resistance fighters were none too pleased to have one master traded for another, so attacks on British troops and installations were soon running rife. Since most of these fighters were Malay-Chinese communists, the Malay government offered to help the British hunt them down, but only if it was willing to grant the country independence afterwards. The Malayan Emergency lasted until 1960, but by 1957 Britain had agreed to grant the Federation of Malaya independence, as well as inclusion within the Commonwealth.

The debacle with the Suez Canal (a political disaster that undermined Britain's interests overseas and its position among the most influential nations in the world further exacerbated

The Suez Crisis

While Britain was slowly rebuilding its military and economy following the ravages of World War II, the empire and its distant colonies still remained somewhat intact. To an extent, Britain had managed to maintain an aura of power and reverence, but it would take one single political blunder in 1956 to pull back that curtain and reveal that the British Empire was no longer alone at the superpower table.

Five years prior, prime minister Winston Churchill was keen to keep the empire intact, and that meant maintaining its military bases at the Suez Canal (a large waterway in Egypt). However, the rise of a new revolutionary Egyptian government soon raised tensions and Churchill was forced to pull British forces out. Churchill's successor, Anthony Eden, did not share the same vision for the Suez Canal and colluded with France to engineer an Israeli attack on Egypt that enabled Britain to intervene and reoccupy the region.

However, the USA, the Soviet Union and the UN boycotted the invasion, forcing Britain, France and Israel to withdraw in disgrace. Not only was it a political disaster for Britain, it proved the nation to be considerably weaker than previously thought and emphasised the USA's rise to prominence.

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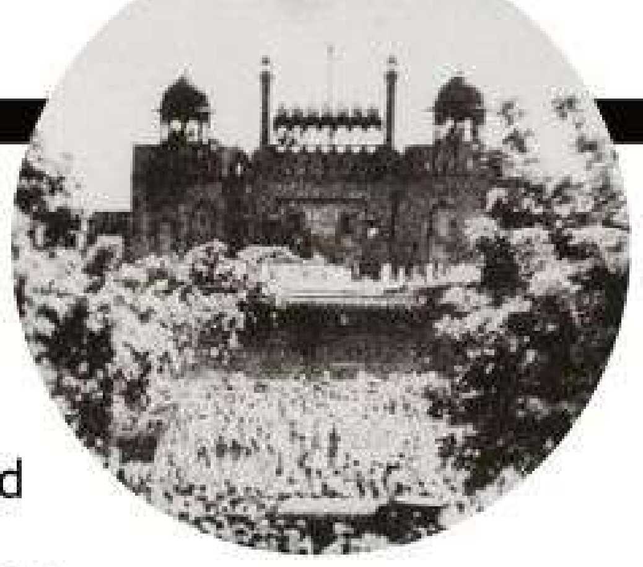
Defining moment

The Falklands War

2 Apr – 14 Jun 1982

Following the debacle at the Suez Canal in the 1950s and the systematic policy of widespread decolonisation of Macmillan and his successors, Britain has been shedding territories like droplets of blood. But when Argentina invades the Falkland Islands – a tiny British overseas territory in the South Atlantic – it sparks a fire in the British people and its government not seen since World War II. Argentina has disputed Britain's sovereignty for almost 150 years, and the arrival of the Argentine Navy in the Falklands on 2 April 1982 results in a ten-week conflict as Britain launches a task force to defend the islands. 649 Argentine military personnel, 255 British military personnel and three Falkland islanders die in the conflict before Argentina surrenders on 14 June.



India gains independence
Practically bankrupt and utterly exhausted from the ravages of World War II, the British people do not want another conflict erupting in the powder keg that is the British Raj. India is soon granted independence and divided in two with the creation of the Islamic nation of Pakistan.
15 August 1947

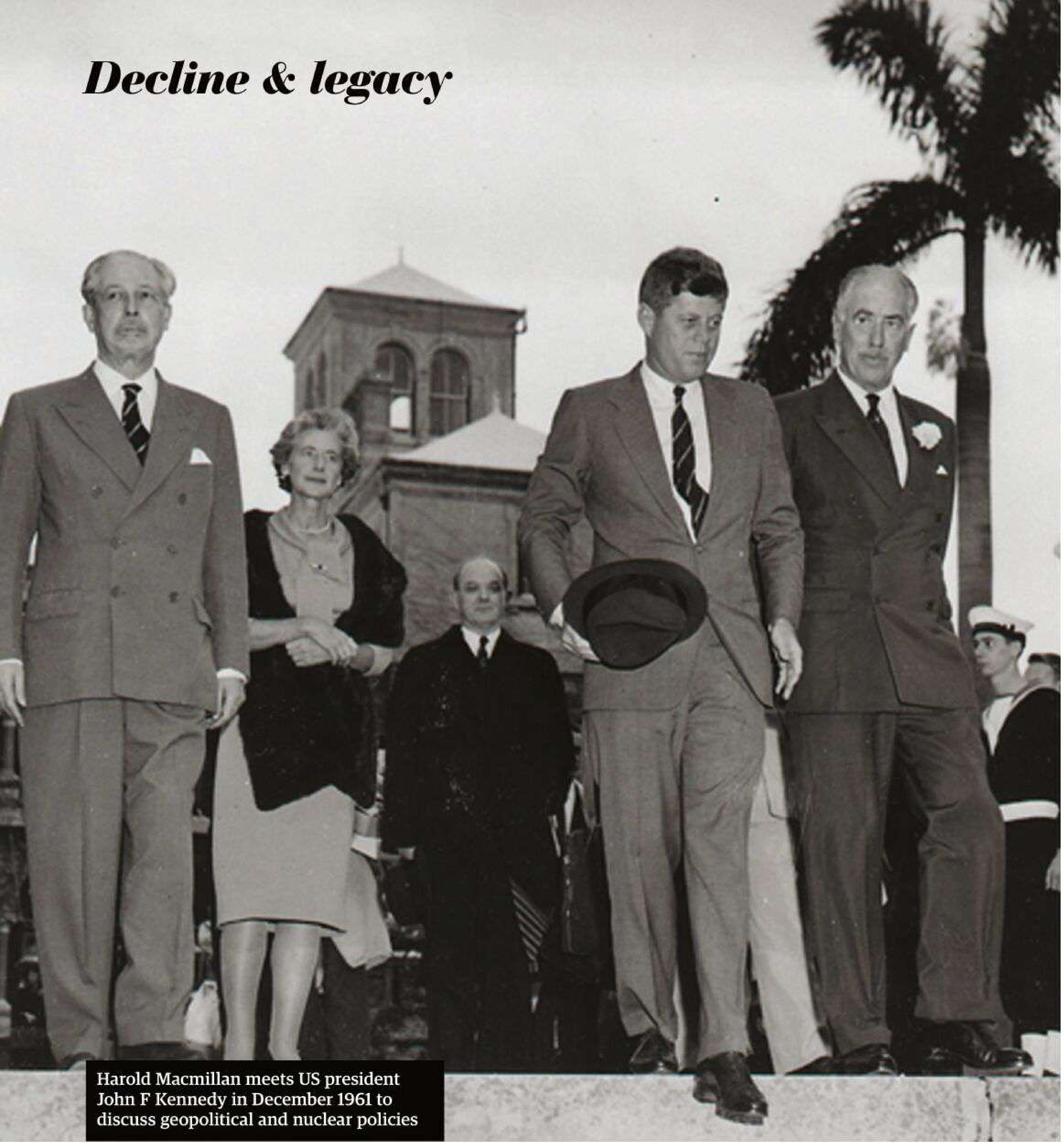
Commonwealth officially born
The Commonwealth has, in one form or another, existed since the early 20th century, but it will take until 1949 for the Commonwealth of Nations to be officially constructed. The core concept is to have a group of nations that hold equal status with each other and Britain.
28 April 1949

Suez Crisis
Despite agreeing to leave Egypt proper following the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, Britain has retained troops at a base in the Suez Canal. This force is removed in 1951 by Churchill, but his successor Eden invades again and is subsequently forced to withdraw in embarrassment.
29 Oct – 7 Nov 1956

Macmillan gives his 'Wind of change' speech
While visiting Cape Town in South Africa, UK prime minister Harold Macmillan gives a speech that places Africa as the platform to transform the empire. His hyperactive pro-decolonisation foreign policy sees countless African states granted full independence from Britain.
3 February 1960

1997

Hong Kong handover to China
After 99 years of leased control by the British Empire, the island state of Hong Kong is formerly passed back into the hands of the People's Republic of China. Negotiations between Britain and China take nearly three decades to reach this diplomatic milestone.
1 July 1997



Harold Macmillan meets US president John F Kennedy in December 1961 to discuss geopolitical and nuclear policies

the problem and proved that the British Empire was no longer the autonomous powerhouse it had once been. More importantly, it showed that Britain would almost certainly need the full support of the United States of America if it was to pursue such major military offensives in the future. Once a mere portion of the empire's wider spread, the USA had become a force in its own right – one powered by industry and a booming economy.

This was a pressing time for Britain, as it was struggling to exert and maintain imperial rule in a new era when economic growth held more sway than military expansion. But all was not lost. The empire didn't simply fall into decay overnight – in fact, that sense of collaboration carried by the semi-autonomous dominions helped foster the creation of what we now know as the Commonwealth of Nations. The concept for this intergovernmental organisation actually started as early as 1887 with the formation of the Imperial Conferences, which enabled many of the semi-autonomous dominions to define their own destiny while still formally allying themselves with Great Britain. The Commonwealth itself went through many forms, but over the first six decades of the 20th century it slowly began to expand with former colonies, dominions and new republics.

The election of prime minister Harold Macmillan in January 1957 would prove to be another deciding factor in the decolonisation of the empire. Following in the wake of his predecessor Anthony Eden's disastrous decision to occupy the Suez Canal, Macmillan believed the only way to strengthen Britain's future projects was to strategically align itself with the United States and begin restructuring Britain's global image. Politics, tracked by the growing reach of the free press, had become all about public perception and the new PM realised that association with the colonial ways of old (with their strong ties to slavery and oppression) would only serve to damage the country further.

Macmillan wished to heal the persona of his own Conservative party at home, and set his sights on humanising what remained of the empire. The solution to this was simple: swift and obvious decolonisation. The desire for full independence and autonomy was sweeping across many of the remaining colonies, and such demands for political and economic freedom were too dangerous to ignore or stifle in the wake of India, Malaya and Palestine.

In February 1960, Macmillan travelled to Cape Town, South Africa and delivered a speech that informally signalled the most dramatic phase of decolonisation the empire had ever known. Keen to avoid the same kind of civil conflict that France was entrenched in with Algeria, Macmillan claimed he felt "the wind of change blowing through this continent" and he saw fit to see that sentiment into reality. The Gold Coast, Sudan and the Suez Canal Zone had all been granted independence in 1956

The Commonwealth: an empire reborn

It seems a curious notion to consider the Commonwealth of Nations as an evolved version of the British Empire, but by the mid-20th century the imperialist empire of the preceding centuries was a thing of the past. Britain needed to re-evaluate its position on the world stage and an intergovernmental cabal that promoted the mantra of independence and cooperation was exactly what was needed to shake off the ghosts of slavery and military conquests.

In the modern era, the Commonwealth is still going strong with 53 member states that all retain voluntary membership, although only 16 of them embrace Queen Elizabeth II as their head of state. The existence and, more importantly, the endurance of the Commonwealth has also brought into question Britain's involvement in Europe and the pressures that association continues to place on the nation. As part of the Commonwealth (Britain is an equal member, not a primary or premium state above any other), member states aren't bound to the organisation and can leave any time, fostering a true sense of participation and autonomy.

However, the Commonwealth hasn't been without its negative connotations. Britain's desire to participate as an equal – rather than a leader – has led some detractors to criticise the organisation for being too indifferent to important matters such as racial segregation and the state of equality in its individual states. The Charter of the Commonwealth, signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II in 2013, took a new stance on these points, stating that the collective opposed "all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds."

Prime minister Harold Macmillan instigated a dramatic decolonisation programme

Canada provided the biggest contribution of infantry and pilots to the British Empire during World War II

and as the 1960s took flight, many more African states followed – including Nigeria (1960), British Somaliland (1960), Sierra Leone (1961), Southern Cameroon (1961), Tanganyika (1961), Uganda (1962), Zanzibar (1963), Kenya (1963), Northern Rhodesia (1964), Nyasaland (1964), Rhodesia (1965), Gambia (1965), Basutoland (1966), Bechuanaland (1966), Swaziland (1968) and Mauritius (1968).

Territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean followed suit, with Jamaica and Trinidad achieving full independence in 1961 and 1962, respectively. Guyana and Barbados went the same way in 1966, as did many others. Throughout the two decades that followed, more nations requested and were granted independence from Great Britain – and with the passing of the British Nationality Act of 1981, those Crown colonies that remained part of the empire were reclassified as 'British Dependent Territories' (meaning they operated with full autonomy but still recognised the British monarch as their head of state).

And with the passing of that act, the British Empire's true colonial power was broken. By the time Britain formerly signed control of Hong Kong over to the People's Republic of China in 1997, the British Empire was effectively over. The last remnant of its distant conquests and acquisitions had traded off to strengthen ties and relations with another nation that had paled in Britain's shadow at the height of imperial dominance.

Was Britain diminished by its loss of the colonies and dominions? Certainly, but the empire was a construct from a bygone era – a hangover from an age when lands were yet to be explored; one in which rights and privileges were designed by those who conquered, not those who were native to the lands themselves.

At its height, the British Empire was a staggering 33.7 million square miles (that's 22 per cent of the world under one monarch). Yet, by the end of 1990s, Britain was only as broad and as expansive as its own borders. The empire outlived the era that supported its energetic and often aggressive expansion, so decolonisation on the scale we witnessed throughout the 20th century was, by and large, inevitable. The modern world doesn't turn on lands acquired, but political alliances and trade agreements, so the fragmentation and eventual dissolution of the empire was necessary to facilitate Britain's position on the global stage we know today.

The Imperial Conference of 1923 was the first to be attended by the Irish Free State established in the preceding year

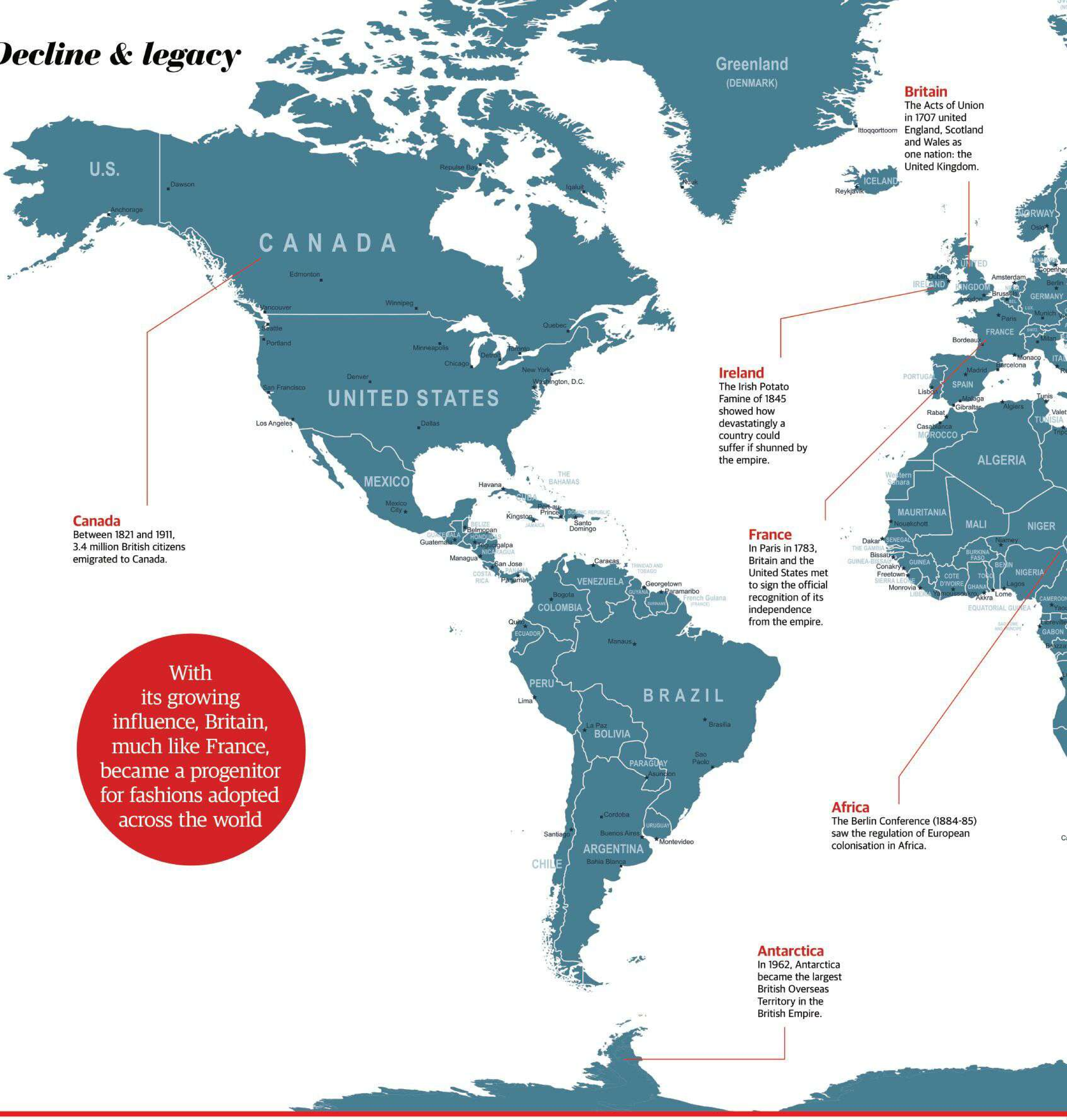
Hong Kong: the death knell for the empire

While the extent to which Britain reacted to preserve its influence over the Falkland Islands in 1982 showed a stirring of the empire's indomitable old ghost, the end of sovereignty in Hong Kong would mark the true end of the empire. The two island territories, separated by over 16,000 kilometres, polarised the destiny of Britain's power overseas.

Britain began its inclusion of Hong Kong within the empire in 1898 following the The Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory with China under the Qing dynasty. The acquisition wasn't a typical addition to the empire either – in fact, Hong Kong's inclusion in Britain's overseas portfolio was actually a lease, and one that was planned to last for 99 years. Such a fact makes 'the Handover' back to China in 1997 less of a loss for the empire and more of a planned release that simply provided a clean break that separated Britain from the last vestiges of its distant colonies.

Hong Kong was originally passed into British jurisdiction because China was unable to properly defend it following a lengthy conflict with Japan – so, with that in mind, Britain fortified it and turned it into a military training ground for RAF and Royal Navy troops. And while Japan occupied the island briefly from 1941, British rule was eventually re-established in 1946 and it didn't take long for the island's economy to start booming as industries such as textiles flourished in the capitalist economy maintained in the socialist shadow of mainland China.

Despite the expiry date on British occupation already being set in stone, relations between the now communist-controlled People's Republic of China and Britain were frosty at best. Britain's presence in Southeast Asia rankled China's socialist leaders, and it would take over three decades of careful, almost balletic negotiations for the two nations to begin planning the slow transition of Hong Kong from British to Chinese sovereignty.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Tunis
Nouakchott
Dakar
Bissau
Conakry
Freetown
Monrovia
Niamey
Yamoussoukro
Accra
Lome
Lagos

Britain
The Acts of Union in 1707 united England, Scotland and Wales as one nation: the United Kingdom.

Canada
Between 1821 and 1911, 3.4 million British citizens emigrated to Canada.

Ireland
The Irish Potato Famine of 1845 showed how devastatingly a country could suffer if shunned by the empire.

France
In Paris in 1783, Britain and the United States met to sign the official recognition of its independence from the empire.

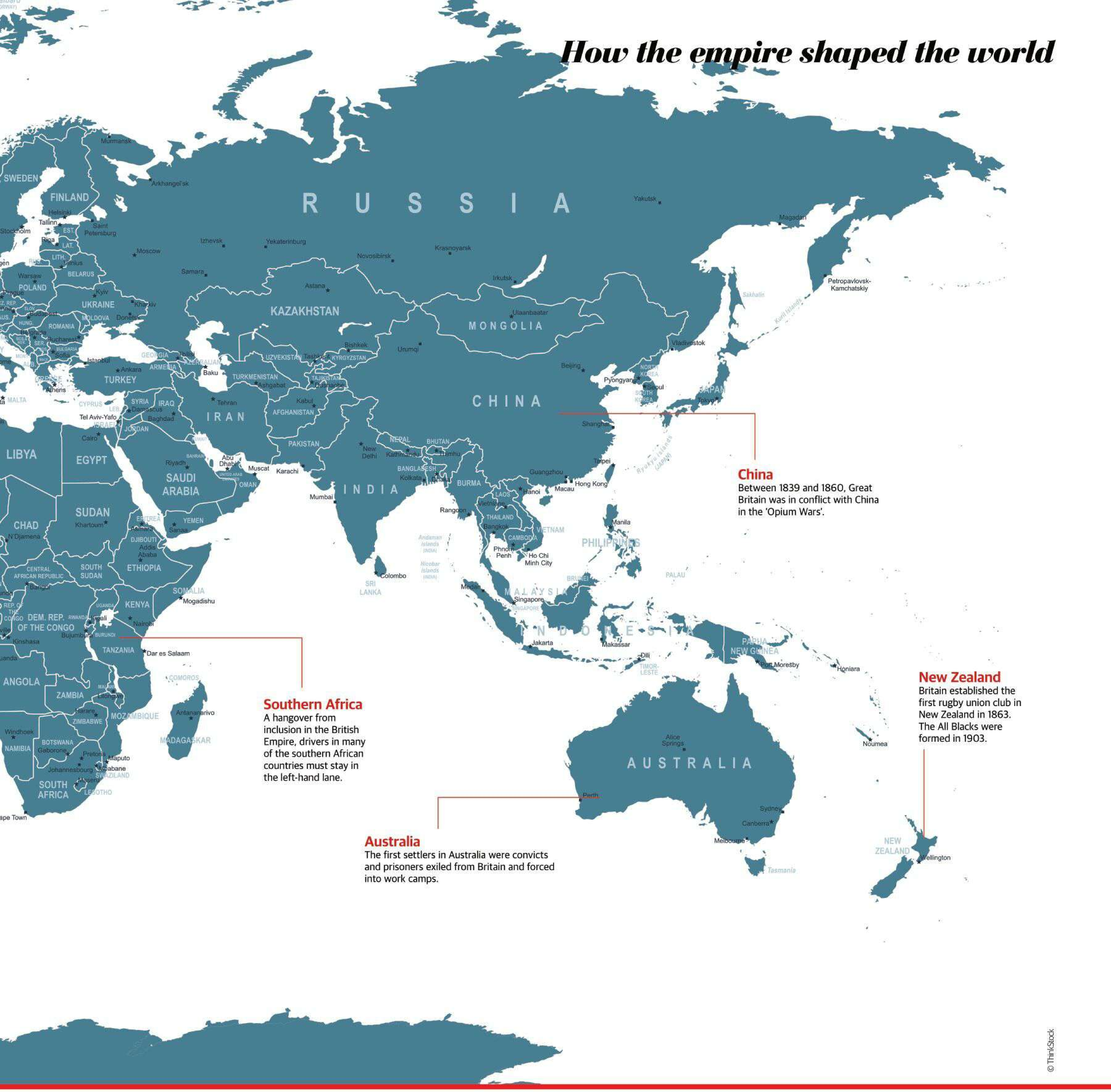
Africa
The Berlin Conference (1884-85) saw the regulation of European colonisation in Africa.

Antarctica
In 1962, Antarctica became the largest British Overseas Territory in the British Empire.

> With its growing influence, Britain, much like France, became a progenitor for fashions adopted across the world

How the empire shaped the world

How the empire shaped the world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Tokyo
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Ryukyu Islands (JAPAN)
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Hanoi
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Gaborone
Pretoria
Johannesburg
Maputo
Mbabane
SWAZILAND
Maseru
LESOTHO
SOUTH AFRICA
Cape Town

China
Between 1839 and 1860, Great Britain was in conflict with China in the 'Opium Wars'.

Southern Africa
A hangover from inclusion in the British Empire, drivers in many of the southern African countries must stay in the left-hand lane.

New Zealand
Britain established the first rugby union club in New Zealand in 1863. The All Blacks were formed in 1903.

Australia
The first settlers in Australia were convicts and prisoners exiled from Britain and forced into work camps.

© ThinkStock

From the Elizabethan era to the handover of Hong Kong, the empire influenced the modern world more than you might imagine

Outside of ancient world history, no other nation extended its reach and influence across the globe quite as far or as succinctly as the British Empire. Built on the back of trade, warfare and the proliferation of slavery, British imperialism transformed the New World in countless ways.

The empire brought global trade to its colonies and installed economies based on the British pound; it brought (for better or for worse) religion, which in turn poured wealth into the Protestant church; it added infrastructure, building homes and municipal buildings and added new agricultural techniques that changed the face of the New World.

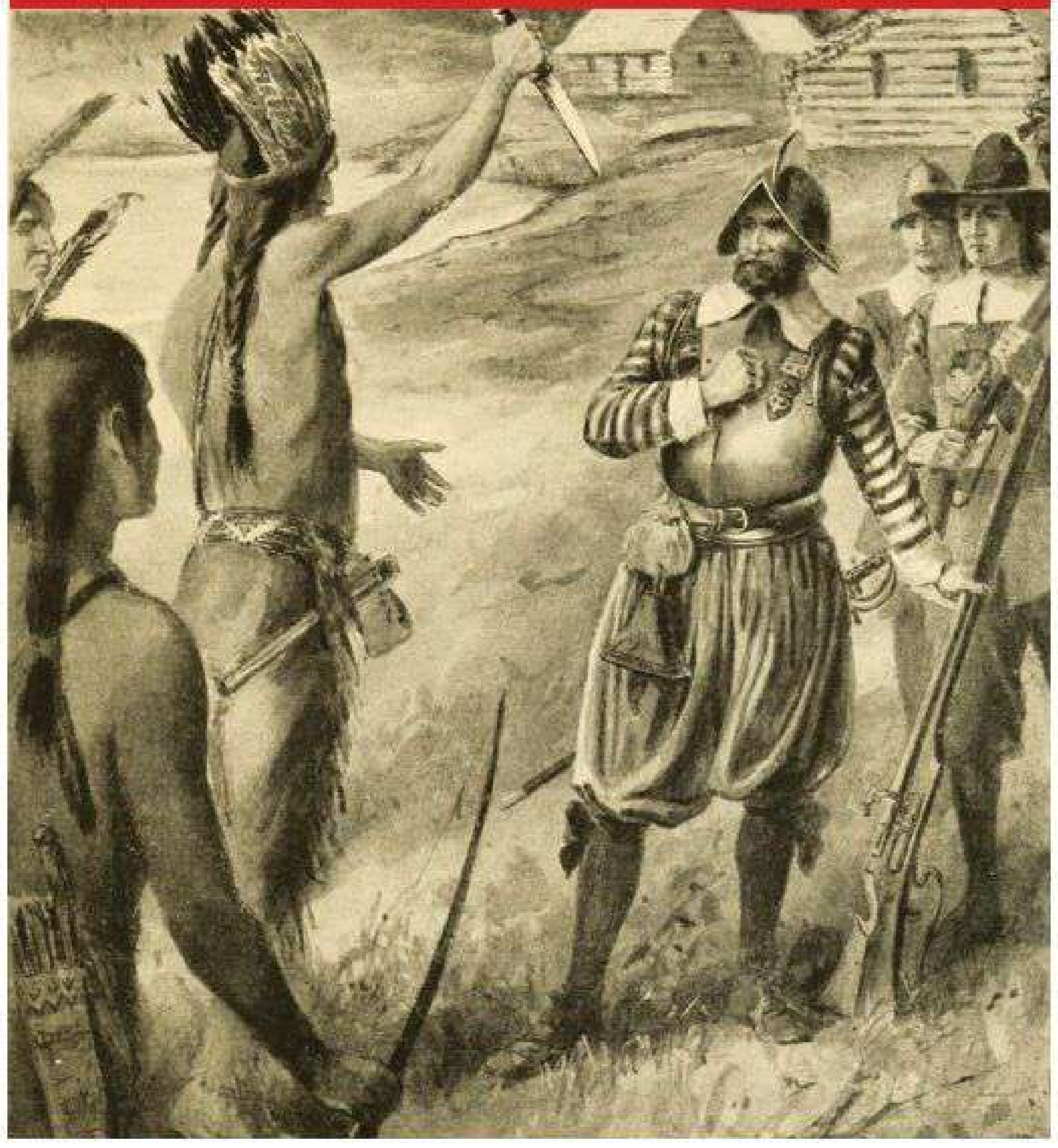
But for every gesture that improved the lives of the empire's distant citizens, there was one just as destructive. Britain installed governments but struggled to give each nation a true version of self-governance. It provided protection, with one of the largest armed forces the world had ever known, but this also oppressed the very people it shielded. Then there was slavery – a vile trade Britain turned into a global market. These are just some of the ways the empire changed the world.

Religion

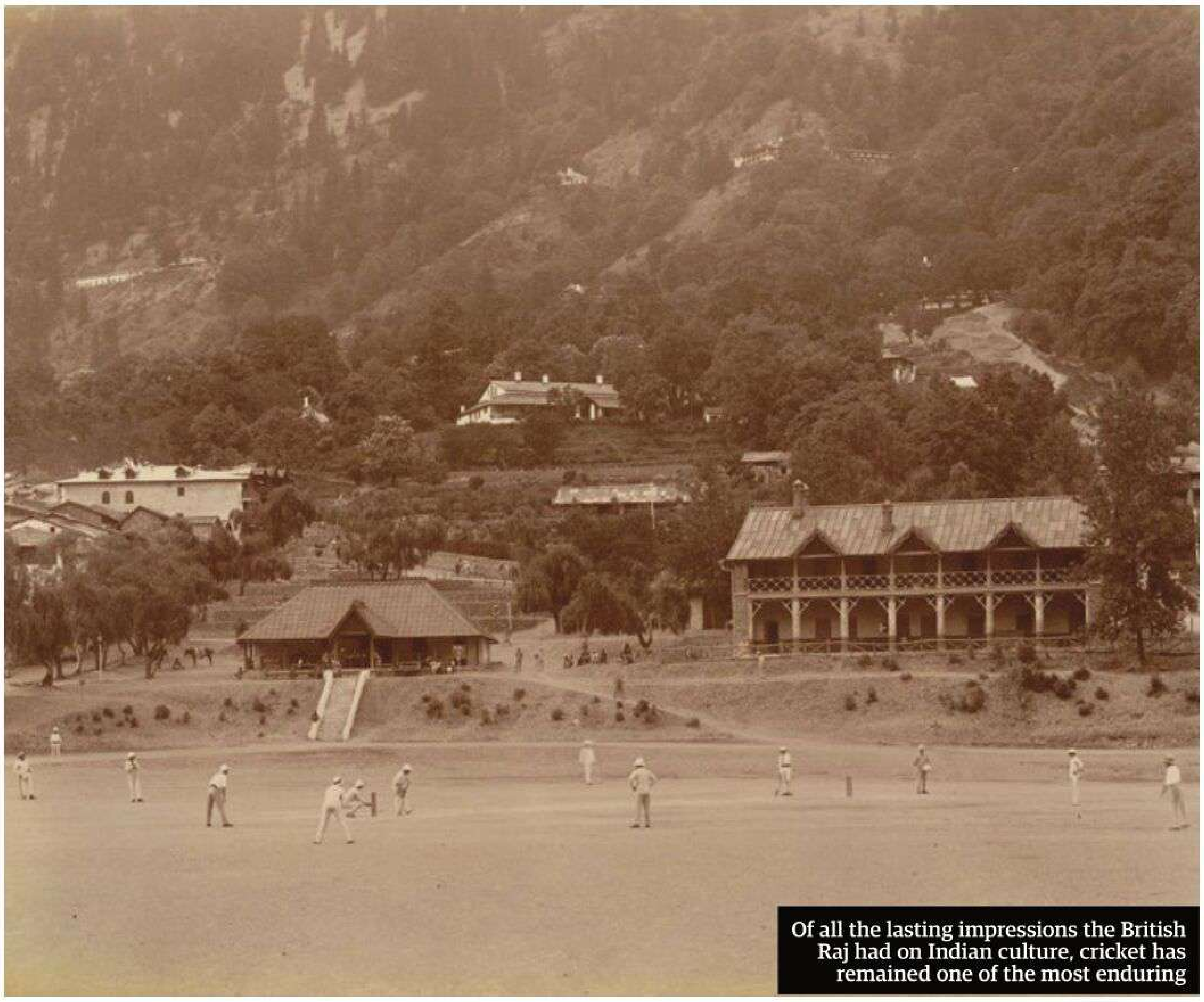
Christianity transformed the world beyond England like almost no other factor. It was a powerful tool that shaped the kingdom at home, filling the coffers of both the Catholic and Anglican churches while providing both the monarch and Parliament with the moral justification for many of its actions. Religion was a potent force during the first 300 years of the empire, and one easily manipulated – especially outside of ecclesiastical oversight in the New World and beyond.

Missionaries who landed in the Americas in the late 1500s and early 1600s were at the forefront of the empire's spiritual transformation of its extended territories. Many of these missionaries were Puritans, the more radical arm of the Protestant spectrum, who used the anxious and barely settled communities to reaffirm the power of the church that had been diluted back in England by the manipulations of the monarchy and parliament. In short, the prevalence of Protestantism had a huge impact on the mind-set of pre-independence America. By the census of 1790, the total immigration over a 130-year period was summised to be 3.9 million people – 2.6 million of whom were British citizens.

America wasn't alone in its Christianisation – in the race to expand and conquer territories against Catholic Spain and Portugal, England was swift to establish colonies across West Africa, the Philippines, India and beyond. The sheer spread of Christianity throughout the world, especially in countries such as India with already established organised religions, owes much of its existence to the religious hyperactivity of the British Empire.



> "The prevalence of Protestantism had a huge impact on the mind-set of pre-independence America"



Of all the lasting impressions the British Raj had on Indian culture, cricket has remained one of the most enduring

Sport & pastimes

As the British Empire spread, it imprinted the very concept of Britishness on its colonies – including many of its pastimes

Sport and other assorted pastimes played a crucial role in developing and maintaining the British Empire in the latter part of the 19th century, as they became a means by which British values could be transmitted to new populations in different countries. As well as acquiring colonies to strengthen the empire and aid trading, the British also saw it as their duty to civilise countries in Asia and Africa and so strong young men were sent to travel abroad to isolated places, live in conditions considered extreme and be exposed to new kinds of diseases. Sport was used as a means to better prepare these men for the rigours they faced as it helped to develop numerous attributes, both physical and mental, including self control, good health and fitness, the ability to work in a team, good leadership, loyalty, and focus. As well as a means of developing character and fitness, sport was also a great source of entertainment and camaraderie amongst the soldiers and colonialists. It was also a means of developing social cohesion among the social classes and aiding communication between colonialists and native populations.

Although cricket was widely regarded as the most important sport played throughout the empire, other sports and games figured too. These included polo, tennis and hunting – all of which helped to develop and maintain the fitness levels of the military – and also indoor games such as snooker, which helped to stave off the boredom during the evenings. As Britain could never govern the empire without the consent of the governed, sport was essential to implant imperial values into the local populations and develop the trust and loyalty needed to power the empire forward.

Economy & trade

A strong practice of trading everything from the exotic to the mundane around the globe didn't just benefit London, it kick-started economies around the world

Of all the ways the British Empire has shaped the world, the power of trade and the lasting impression of economics stands as one of the most significant. By 1688, the English economy (England didn't become Britain until the Acts of Union in 1707) was flourishing thanks to one of the richest and fastest expanding middle classes in the world. That middle class isn't the one we think of today, but a mercantile class, a *trading* class that built its fortune on the many industries England had established throughout the colonies.

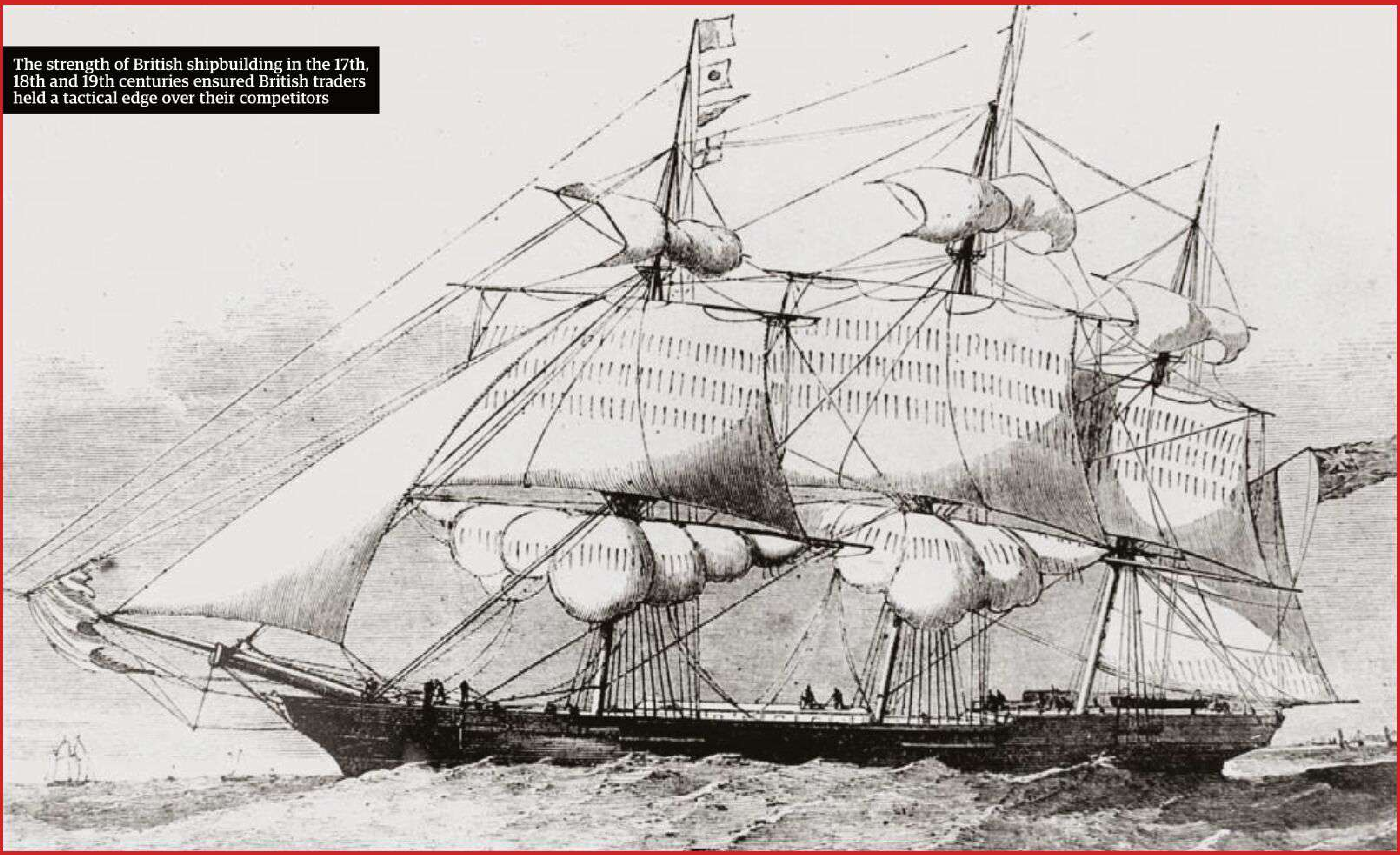
These trade outposts, which multiplied following the permanent establishment of Virginia in the Americas in 1607 and Barbados in 1625, brought huge numbers of citizens looking to start new lives in a new land. By the close of the 17th century, more than 350,000 people had settled in the Americas. As these numbers grew, the settlements became towns and cities; communities formed their own economies thanks to agricultural techniques brought over with them and exports of local commodities.

By 1686, these distant colonies were reflecting the strength of the economy back in London with a staggering £1 million worth of goods shipped back to the heart of the empire. The exports and commodities differed depending on the region – colonies in Asia produced mostly silks and spices, while those in the Americas centred around cotton, sugar and tobacco. Demand for these exports remained high in London and the rest of Europe among the upper classes, so the colonies in turn flourished.

While Britain imported luxury goods such as silk and tea, its main export to the colonies was woollen textiles

While this relationship had mutual benefits, it was also a truncated experience that was held back from fully expanding naturally. The Navigation Acts (a set of laws brought into effect multiple times through the 17th century) deemed that English colonies must send all exports to London and do so using only English ships. Relationships the colonies had built with Dutch traders were nullified by the acts.

By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the economies of these colonies continued to flourish as new technologies and industrialised practices arrived from London. The establishment of factories transformed many of the colonies and dominions further still. North America was the most stark example of a nation transformed. By the late 1700s, trade had become somewhat 'Americanised' – North America and the West Indies received 57 per cent of exports from the British mainland, while providing a considerable 32 per cent of exports back into the empire.


The strength of British shipbuilding in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries ensured British traders held a tactical edge over their competitors

Agriculture

Soon attention was turned to transforming the grassy homeland into a profitable and self-sustaining entity

By the middle of the 17th century, England was undergoing something of an agricultural revolution. New advances in the field had seen the archaic practices that had been used to till the land for centuries banished forever in favour of new techniques and technologies that sent English agricultural output into hyperactive overdrive.

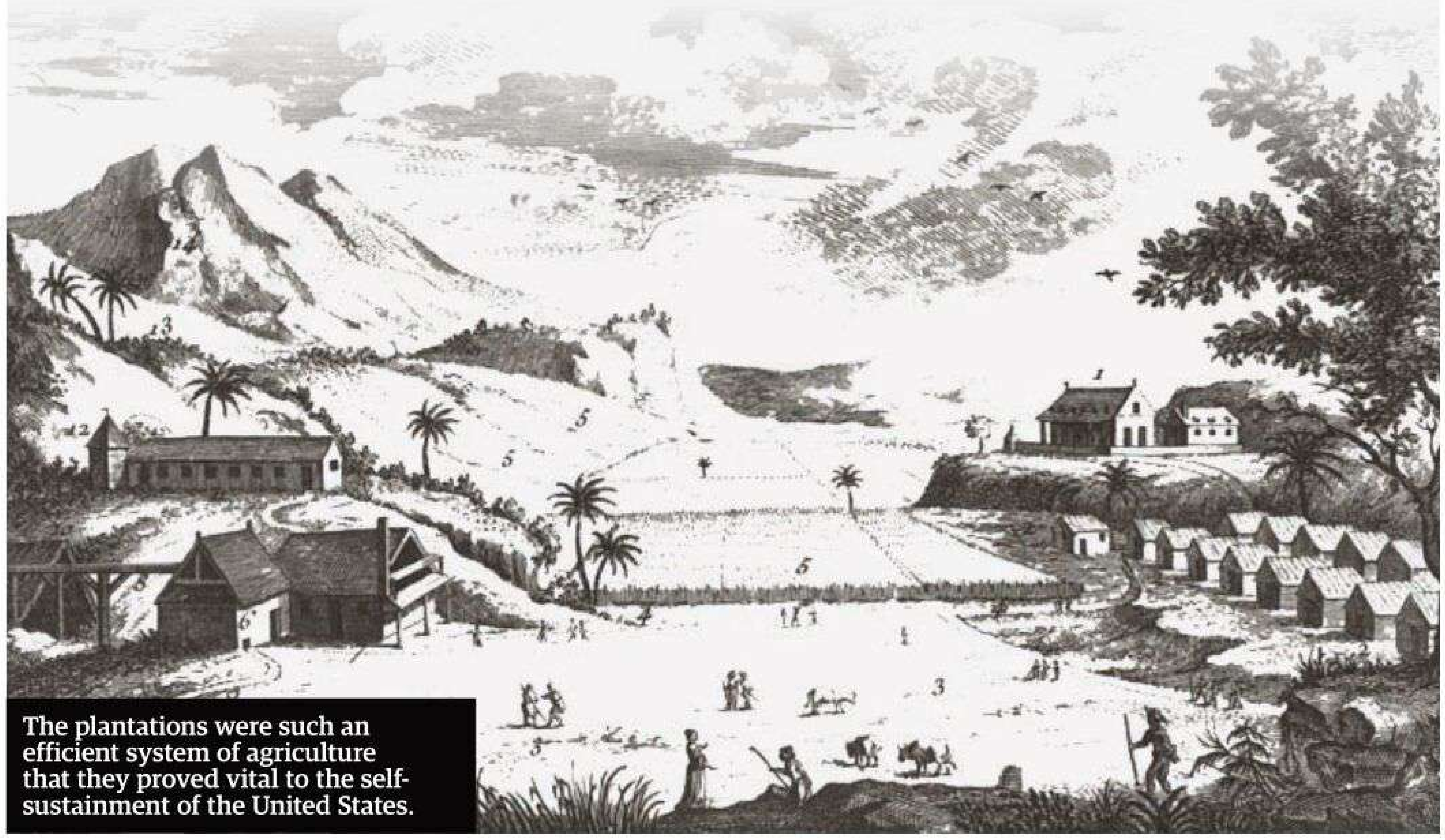
The industry boomed between 1700 and 1800, and by 1770 agricultural output finally overtook the growth of the now British population, making the nation the most productive in the world.

This revolution wasn't isolated to the little island either, and it wasn't long before these game-changing new techniques found their way across the oceans to the empire's colonies across the world. One of those new techniques helped turn these colonies and dominions into agricultural powerhouses: the plantation. Applicable to multiple different crops, the plantation was all about sowing and harvesting crops as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

The earliest versions were centred around the harvesting of cotton, sugar and tobacco - staple products of the early colonies in the Caribbean and the Americas - but its design soon spread across the empire, such as into the production of coffee in East Africa, rubber in Malaya and tea, jute and indigo in India.

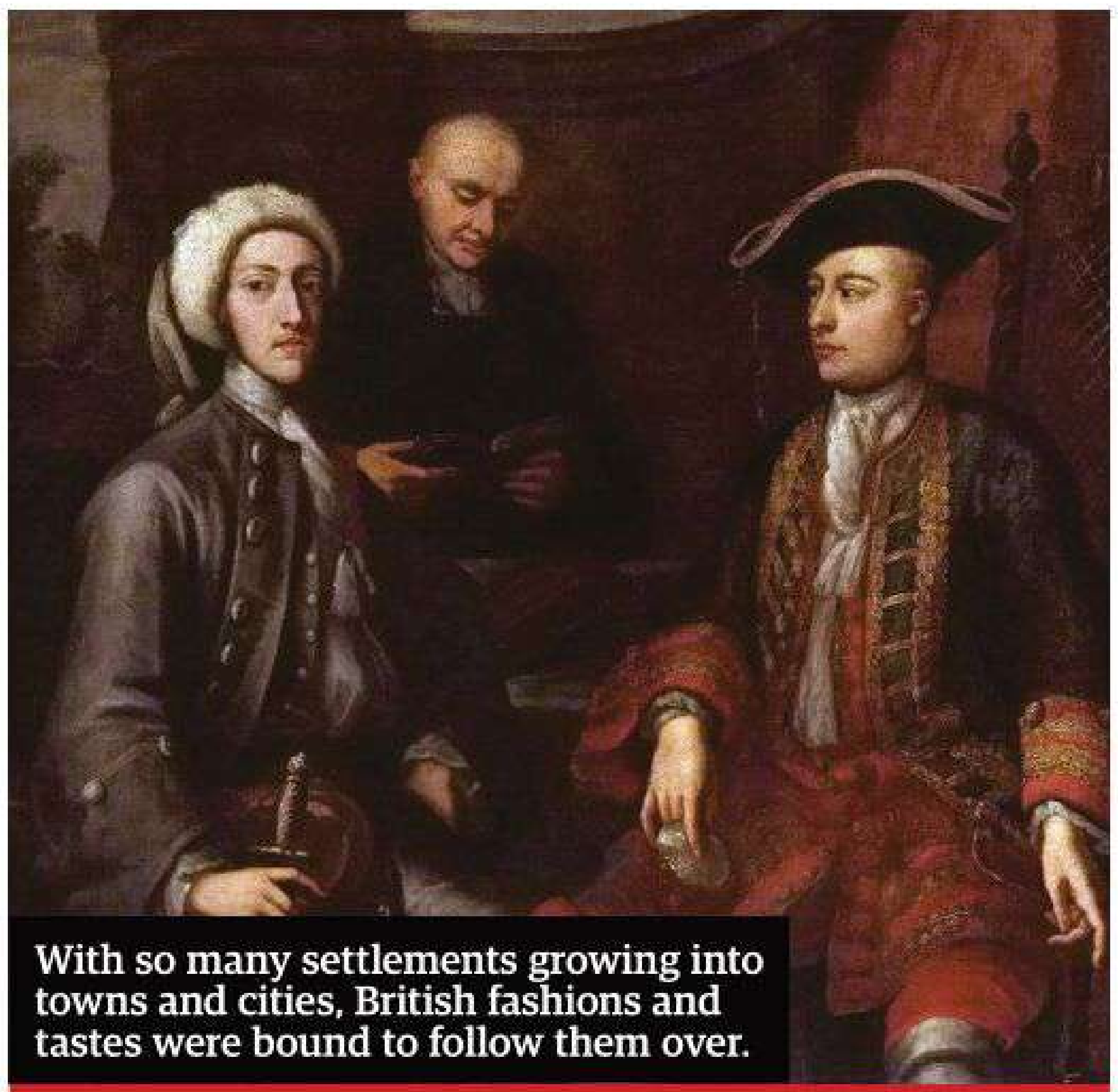
However, while a plantation could do wonders for output when in operation, it was an expensive venture and required considerable capital to start-up, so it favoured the richer families in each settlement.

Between 1891 and 1938, Britain invested considerable amounts of money into the irrigation of the British Raj



The plantations were such an efficient system of agriculture that they proved vital to the self-sustainment of the United States.

"By the first quarter of the 18th century, consumerism had spread like wildfire across the colonies and saw a rise in portraiture and music"


With so many settlements growing into towns and cities, British fashions and tastes were bound to follow them over.

Arts & culture

The arts, and many other aspects of British culture, were bound to be seeded in the colonies - not necessarily because they were forced on the native populations, more that large communities of British citizens emigrated to India, Africa and the Americas. They brought with them a taste for fine architecture and portraiture as well as a keen love of the theatre. By the first quarter of the 18th century, consumerism had spread like wildfire across the colonies and saw a rise in portraiture and music. Even literature began to grow in the colonies.

However, the empire's desire to imprint itself on the colonies it conquered also had a darker side - one powered by the greed and insatiable fine tastes of its military officers and governors. Works of art (be they pottery, glassware, sculptures or paintings) were often recovered from naval skirmishes and conquered forts, but some sites of historic importance were also pillaged in order to fill the halls, private residences and museums of Great Britain.

The Parthenon in the Acropolis in Athens was one such site that was subjected to this ransacking; Scottish nobleman and diplomat Thomas Bruce, Seventh Earl of Elgin (otherwise known as Lord Elgin) stripped the temple bare and took a large number of Greek stone sculptures.

Like many of these acquisitions, they still reside in Britain today (the Parthenon Marbles can be found at the British Museum), but their presence leaves an unhealthy reminder of the empire's greed for the world's most sought-after treasures.

Infrastructure

The British Empire didn't just establish settlements and plantations, it made every effort to put in place vital infrastructure, too

Infrastructure was key to the long-term survival of a colony, especially if it was a particularly large territory, such as those found in West Africa. Unlike much of the rest of the empire, the application of modern infrastructure didn't occur in the African continent until the early 20th century.

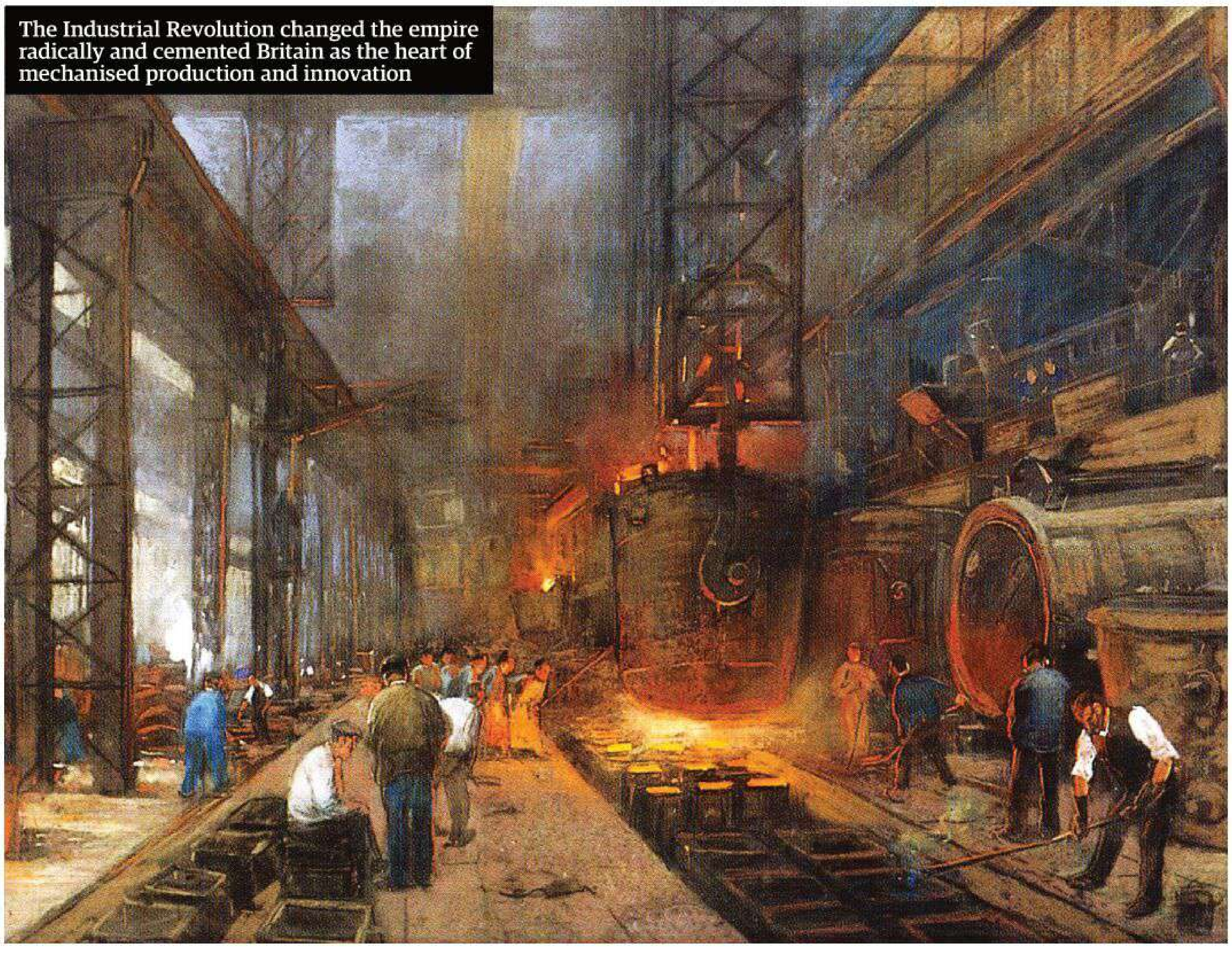
By the turn of the century, Britain desired to have more control of the economic future of its colonial investments in West Africa, so it began the slow and arduous process of converting an incredibly rural collection of colonies into a connected web of transportation and municipal services. Roads were laid and railways spread out across the land. Much of this was fuelled not only by many of the native people's desire to resist colonisation, but also by a need to outmanoeuvre other imperial nations such as France and Spain performing similar duties elsewhere on the African continent.

While the addition of this infrastructure was there to modernise these territories for the waves of white British settlers that had made their homes there, it also helped Britain reach deep into West African territory and tap the almost boundless resources held within its bosom. By pushing the railway further inland, Britain was able to mine and transport tons of precious cargo including diamonds, gold, iron, silver, cobalt and more. Those resources were almost priceless, and their absorption back into the empire helped soothe the financial cost of World War I.

Following the growth of the slave trade, Britain had built strong political ties with many of Africa's leaders

Industry

The Victorian Era was a time of transformation for the empire, and that industrial tide swept the colonies up with it



The Industrial Revolution changed the empire radically and cemented Britain as the heart of mechanised production and innovation

The mechanised metamorphosis that typified 19th-century Britain did more than just energise industries and the economy, it spread across the empire and transformed life in these new lands forever. The production of consumer goods became far smoother, with firearms, furniture and clothing being produced faster and without the need for huge swathes of manual labour.

That drop in the need for large work forces coincided with the abolition of slavery in 1833, which saw the industry the empire had been built upon decommissioned. The arrival of the Industrial Revolution, which finally took hold between 1820-40, was a timely arrival for the colonies and helped bolster everything from agriculture to transportation. The plantations were reborn with the introduction of mechanised tools making the tending and harvesting of crops quicker and easier.

The proliferation of the steam age came to the Americas with wanton abandon, providing the perfect opportunity for private companies to join the East and West Coasts for the first time via train track. Launched with government sponsorship in 1862, the First Transcontinental Railway quite literally changed the country forever, helping breakdown the barrier of the Frontier and bringing the country together like never before.

The Industrial Revolution came with its fair share of negative results, too. The burning of coal (a central part of early mechanisation that drove the use of steam) suddenly made pollution a very real consideration for citizens at home and abroad. The arrival of factories also put artisans out of work, with more and more popping up in cities in favour of more traditional production lines.

Slavery & racism

Like many other nations at the time, the British Empire turned slavery into a global market, but the damning legacy is still being felt around the world

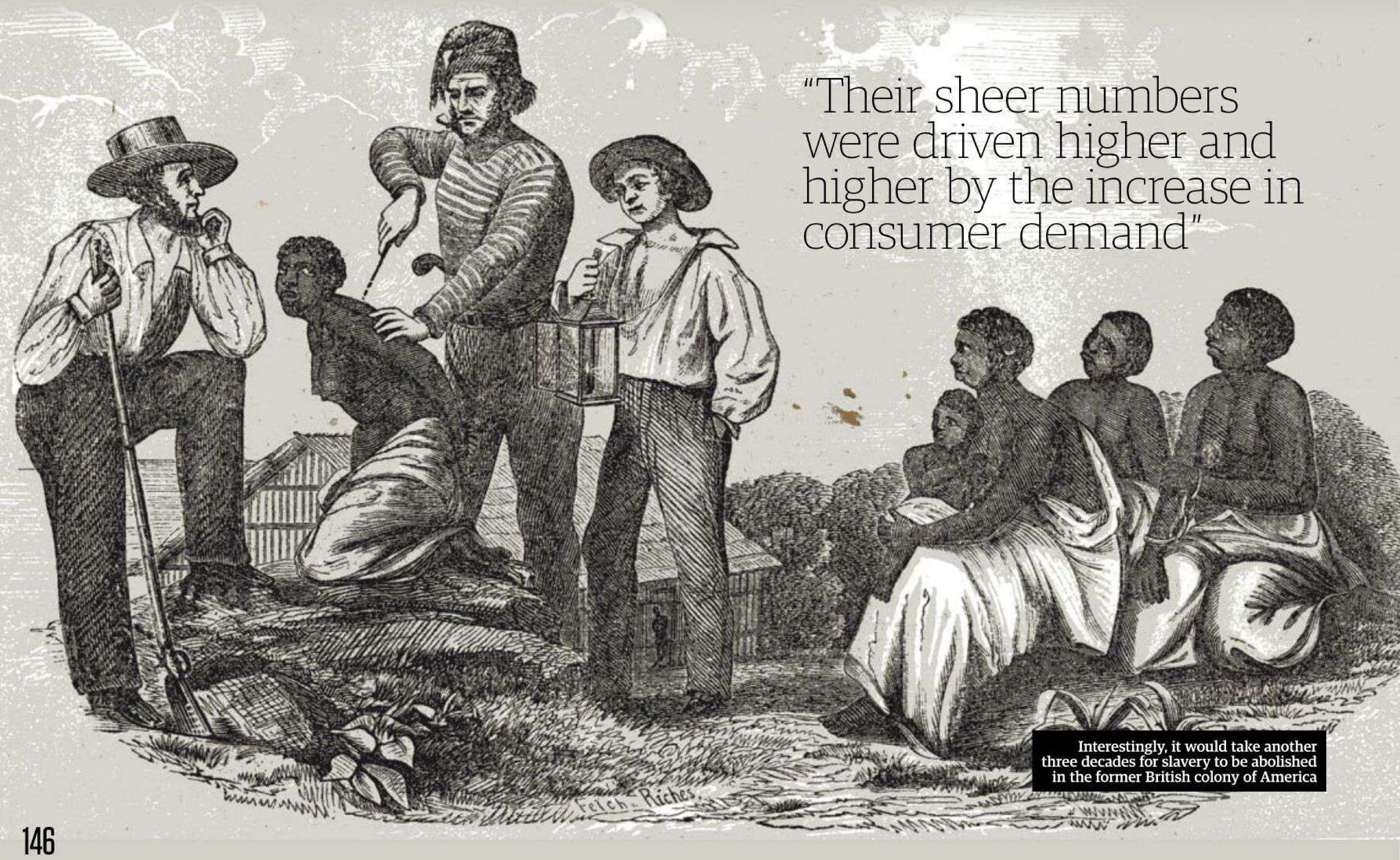
It's a disturbing thought to imagine the sale of people and manual labour as a trade, but that was the reality that existed in the British Empire between the late 1600s to 1833, when slavery was finally abolished by Parliament. It's no over-exaggeration to state that the slave trade became the bedrock of the British economy and the speed and efficiency at which British colonialism spread throughout Africa, Asia and the Americas.

The enslaved workforce at the British Empire's disposal quite literally shaped the world. They worked the fields, built railways, mined resources and built structures, and their sheer numbers were driven higher and higher by the increase in consumer demand. The rise and success of the British 'triangular trade' turned many leaders of the African nations into slavers of their own people, which in turn caused internal political strife that exists to this day.

After rescinding the monopoly held by the Royal African Company, Britain became the world's most prolific trader of slaves

As if it wasn't already alarming enough that the slave trade existed in the first place, the attitudes and historical episodes of violence towards the slaves had a lasting impact on the attitudes held by the descendants of the perpetrators towards the victim group. The result is the baffling concept that black people are in some way inferior to whites that has lead to long-standing attitudes of racism that we are still combating and trying to eradicate to this day. An example of how these unhealthy attitudes were cultivated took place in the farm fields. After the emancipation of slaves, the cost of labour sky-rocketed as the ex-slaves now had to be paid closer to market wages by the white plantation owners and farmers. This threatened the viability of the plantation economy, leading to the landowners finding new ways of suppressing wages. One such way was promoting and engaging in racial violence, with the white men developing hostile attitues towards the black workers to justify this violence. These attitudes were then passed down from one generation to the next, mainly through inter-generational socialisation, and the bigotry continued through the bloodlines, in many instances through to modern times.

Though we continue to educate and stamp out racism, it appears that the empire's darkest legacy is the hardest to erase.



"Their sheer numbers were driven higher and higher by the increase in consumer demand"

Interestingly, it would take another three decades for slavery to be abolished in the former British colony of America

Telegraphy was just one of many technologies pioneered in Britain – ensuring the nation and the empire remained an industry leade

Language

For better or for worse, it was the British Empire that made English the linguistic standard across much of the world. It became a global media language and cemented itself as the basis for maritime communication and the foundation for aeronautical communications,

The British Empire, despite all its trade agreements and alliances with its fellow European nations, became an inclusive culture (especially with the advent of the Navigation Acts ensuring overseas trading remained an entirely British affair). As such, the English language was spread throughout the colonies. All of these colonies had their own linguistic systems in place before the arrival of the empire – the French language dominated Canada, Spanish (a by-product of Columbus's own colonies in the 1500s) was widely spoken in the New World, South Africas spoke Afrikaans and Australia had forms of Aboriginal dialect – and every one of them was superseded by English as settlements grew in size and transformed each territory.

Of course, none of these dialects died out, but English soon became the most common language in the land and was soon adopted by many of those respective peoples (much in the same way so many African nations still use French to this day due to France's own colonial efforts on the continent).

England's position as the leader of the Industrial Revolution galvanised the spread of the English language. As a prime manufacturer of ships and other mechanised equipment, other nations had to adopt English as mercantile language. Technology flourished in Britain and English was imprinted on these advances. The creation of the telegraph was at the hands of the British, and as all telegraph operators were English, those who wished to use the system simply had to use English.

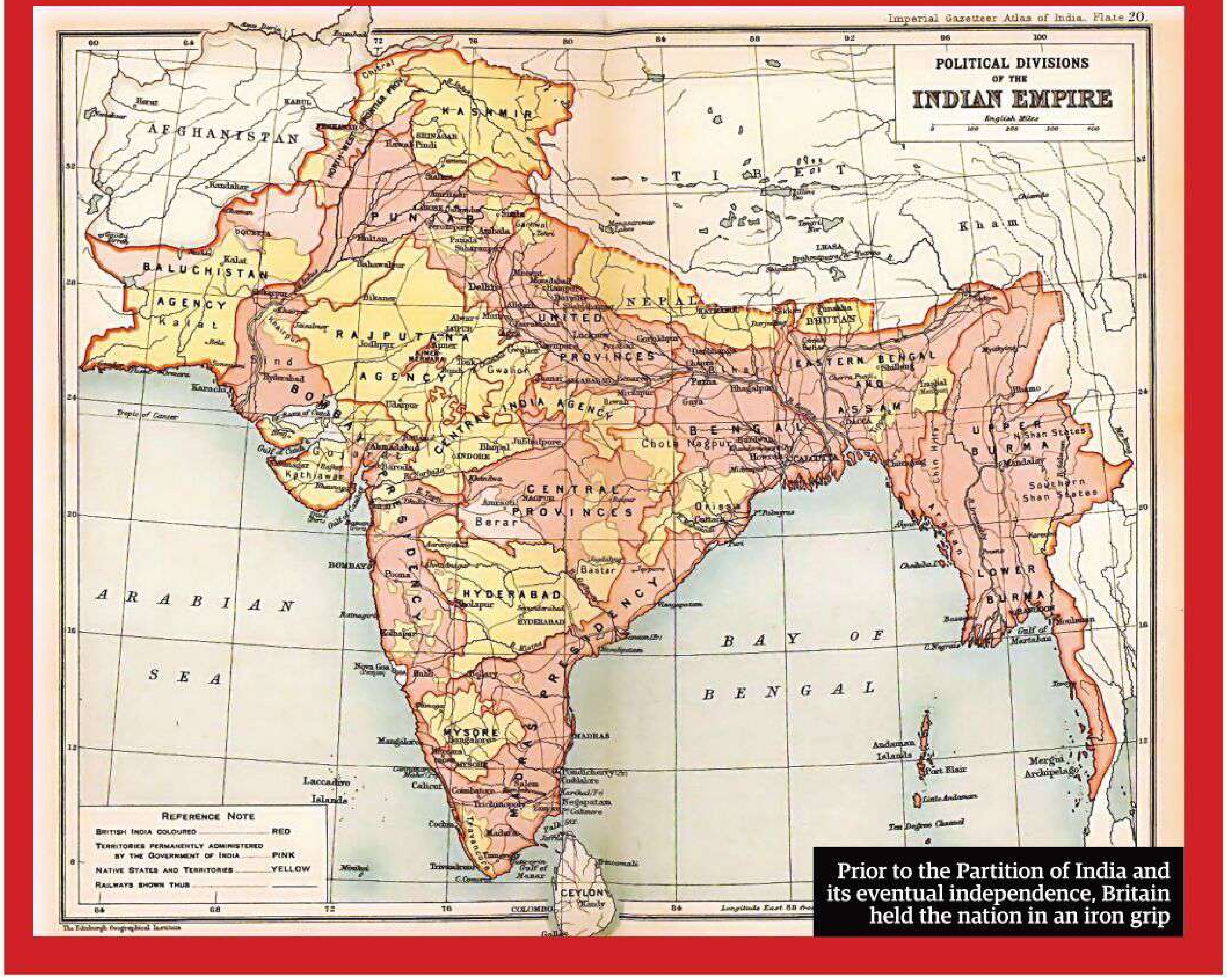
Segregation & partitioning

The British Empire wished to remake the world for it's own end, and that meant carving up territories and subjugating native peoples

Throughout the empire, Britain exerted full control over the colonies it controlled and that often meant the subjugation of the people it encountered. The Native American nations of the Americas found themselves driven from lands they had occupied for centuries with the growth of English and eventually American settlements, while the native citizens of the British Raj lived at heel until its independence in 1947.

But few other peoples found themselves as poorly protected by the nation that had transformed them as much as the black citizens of South Africa. When Britain seized control of the Cape Colony from the Dutch Republic in 1807, it repealed many of the more radical and offensive laws of the Boer states. But the sickness of racial division had long taken route, and Britain eventually gave the individual Boer states the power to enforce laws that disenfranchised non-whites. This was the dark beginning that would eventually lead to the Native Land Act in 1913 that forced native Africans off their own land and the eventual rise of the Apartheid Movement that made black men, women and children second-class citizens for decades.

The empire was not afraid of dividing and partitioning the nations it controlled either. Its bisection of India, creating the Islamic Dominion of Pakistan in 1947, was done to appease religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India and enacted as a final gesture from the empire before independence was granted to India as a whole. A similar situation occurred in Palestine following its absorption into the empire post-World War I; Britain envisioned a new Jewish state in the heart of the Arab territories, and when it eventually pulled out of the region, the seeds for the vision became the creation of the Jewish state known as Israel.


Imperial Gazetteer Atlas of India, Plate 20.
POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE
English Miles
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KASHMIR
PUNJAB
BALUCHISTAN AGENCY
RAJPUTANA AGENCY
NEPAL
BHUTAN
UNITED PROVINCES
CENTRAL INDIA AGENCY
EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM
BENGAL
BOMBAY
CENTRAL PROVINCES
HYDERABAD
MADRAS PRESIDENCY
MYSORE
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Reference Note
British India coloured ... RED
Territories permanently administered by the Government of India ... PINK
Native States and Territories ... YELLOW
Railways shown thus
The Edinburgh Geographical Institute
Prior to the Partition of India and its eventual independence, Britain held the nation in an iron grip

Britain's pride or shame?

From the slave trade to Indian partition, top historians debate the real legacy of the dominion that ruled the waves

What is the first thing to pop into your head when you hear the phrase 'British Empire', and why?

Richard Toye: Oh gosh! Nostalgia, I suppose. Just thinking about the current Brexit issues being inflected by the romantic views of the lost empire.

James Walvin: The Last Night of the Proms – it's all that pomp and circumstance with the drums and trumpets. It's a modern-day celebration of something from the past that has a dark side we're not really interested in talking about, and it somehow represents a view of the British Empire that I don't really buy into and don't much like. The irony is that they sing 'Britain never will be slaves', yet when that song was written at the accession of George II [in 1727], the British were carrying tens of thousands of Africans across the Atlantic in their slave ships.

Between 1662 and 1807, slave exports in British colonial ships numbered about 3 million

John Broich: Anyone who answers that they think of anything other than the old map with the empire coloured in pink is lying – they probably think that's not a sophisticated enough answer. After I envision that map, it tends to get a lot messier in my mind's eye. I see fuzzy outlines, weird illuminated strands of an uneven web connecting the world, pulses of energy moving between parts of the map.

Almost everything on the face of the world is touched by this. This is the real map of the historical empire – an almost impossibly complicated network of influences ricocheting around the planet.

Shrabani Basu: As an Indian, obviously it starts with the crushing of the mutiny and then I think of so many things that are not good: the Bengal famine, all those people who were hanged for fighting for Indian independence. It's a long, unsavoury list, I'm afraid.

Meet the panel

James Walvin

An emeritus professor of history at the University of York, James became a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2006 and has also been awarded an OBE for services to scholarship. He has written several books on slavery and social history, the most recent of which is *Sugar: The World Corrupted from Slavery to Obesity*.

Shrabani Basu

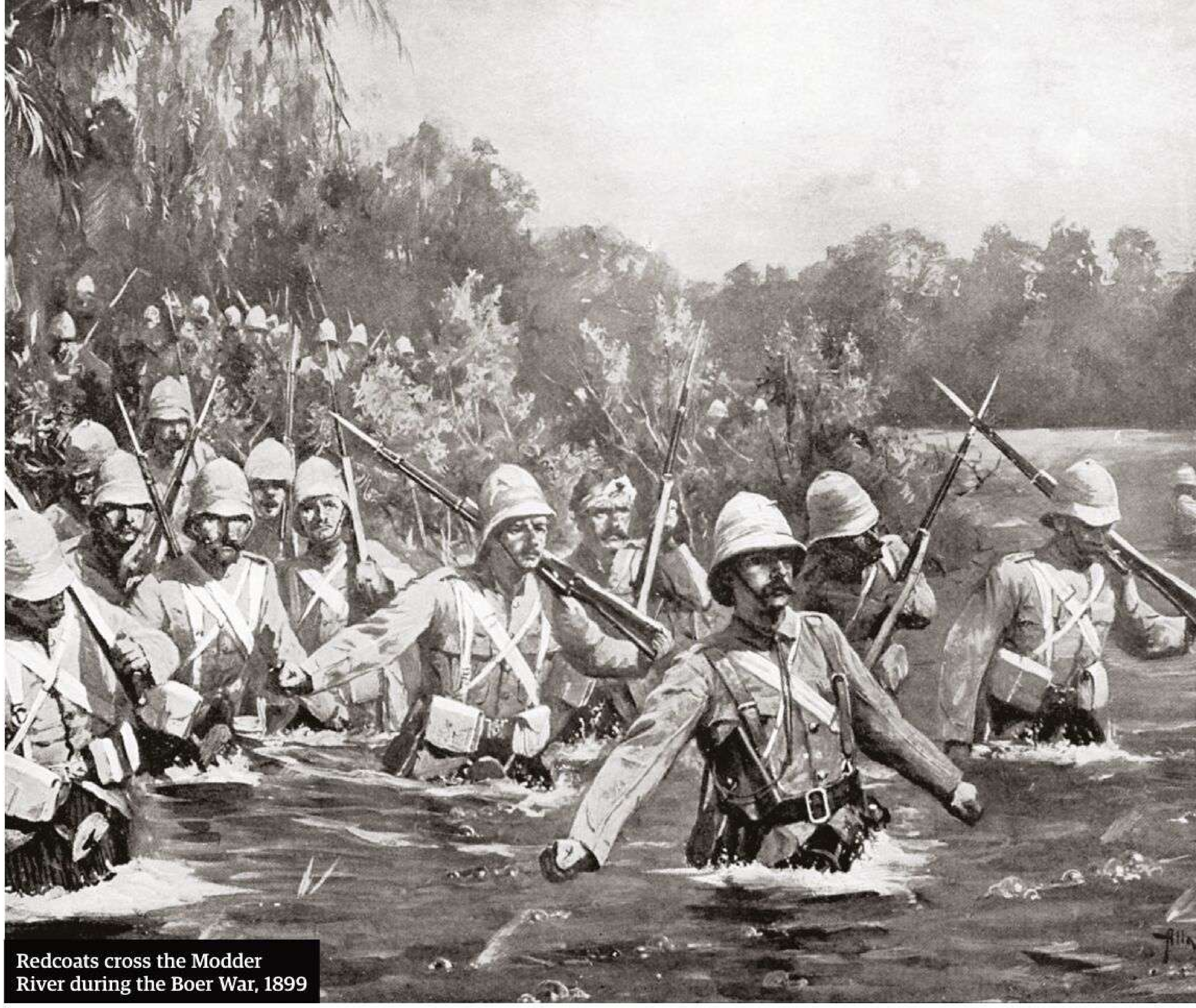
An Indian journalist and author, Shrabani has written for *The Times of India* and *The Telegraph*. Her books include *For King and Another Country*, about Indian soldiers on the Western Front, *Spy Princess*, about World War II heroine Noor Inayat Khan, and *Victoria and Abdul*, which is now a major film starring Judi Dench.

Richard Toye

Richard is a professor of history at the University of Exeter, prior to which he was director of studies for history at the University of Cambridge. He focuses on British history and its global and imperial context from the late 19th century onwards. His works include *Arguing about Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882-1956*.

John Broich

John is associate professor in the history of modern Britain and its empire at Case Western Reserve University in the US. His latest book is *Squadron: Ending the African Slave Trade*, which is about the attempts of British Navy officers and abolitionists to end the slave trade that continued illegally into the 1880s.



Redcoats cross the Modder River during the Boer War, 1899

What aspect of the empire do you wish was more widely understood or acknowledged?

SB: The very fact that the empire was built on the people. It was the people who created it who should be acknowledged for everything. You walk through London and it was all made with money from the empire. You see all these grand country houses and half of them were built with fortunes from the East India Company. That's how those merchants made their money – they owe a lot to the wealth they got from India.

But it's not just about the money. I think what I want to see as a historian is that the role of the colonies is acknowledged in the world wars and all these little stories that people don't know. One and a half million people came to fight in World War I, two and a half million came in World War II. They fought in a war that wasn't theirs and the harshest battles were in Kohima, where the Indians took on the Japanese.

All of these facts need to be known from a very early stage, from school – it should be part of the education curriculum, that's how I see it. The damage is done but at least now the people should be acknowledged.

The dialogue has always been along the lines of we gave them parliamentary democracy and railways but that is very one-sided. [The British] got money from the empire that helped to run [the] health service, the education system and everything else – the money from [India] was gone. It needs to be recognised now.

Money aside – it can be recovered, now India is recovering – I think the harshest legacy is the wounds of partition that still fester and that is lasting damage that the empire dealt.

JW: I suppose the dark side of the empire should be more widely acknowledged, in a way. The benefits are all around us, right down to the kind of statuary that you find in English civil buildings and public squares. For instance, lions are everywhere in the United Kingdom. I was walking through Hull a couple of years ago with a very eminent African historian and he looked up at these lions and asked, "Is the lion a native of East Yorkshire?"

You'd imagine that would be the case because somehow the lion sums up empire and the British. There is a dark side to the animal that seems to reflect the ruthlessness of the way the British, Europeans and Americans governed their own native citizens and their conquered people, as well as what they wanted to extract from them and their land. It is a very harsh story and while you can try to counterbalance it by saying we gave them the English language, we gave them democracy, we gave them the rule of law, even that presumes a lot.

The British don't really talk about the dark side of the empire that much because it doesn't look very favourable to them. People have come

ELIZABETH I 1533-1603

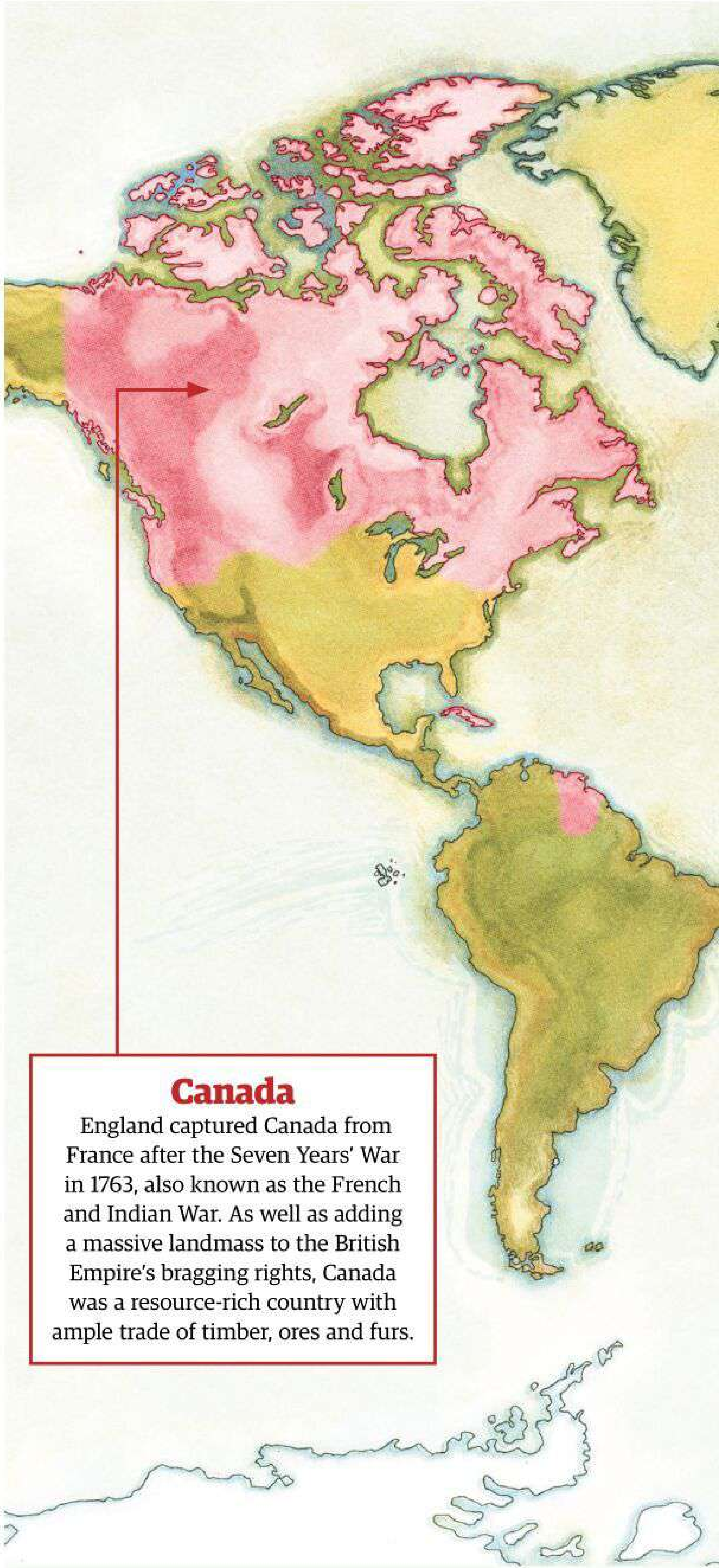
The Virgin Queen sent explorers to the New World to found the first colonies

During the Tudor period, Spain was the dominant colonial power, establishing viceroys in 1521 that covered the conquered lands of the Aztec Empire in Central America and many of the Caribbean islands.

England wanted in on the action. The geographer and travel writer Richard Hakluyt argued that empire was an important way of spreading Christianity and defending Protestantism against a Catholic world. Equally, the wealth that could be accrued by setting up trading posts in Asia, the Far East and the Americas was too lucrative not to pursue.

In 1585, Elizabeth I sent Walter Raleigh to establish a colony on Roanoke Island (in modern-day North Carolina) but the settlers had all but disappeared by 1591, never to be heard from again. Miranda Kaufmann explains, "I don't think the [empire] project really gets going in Elizabethan England […] a lot of the proto-imperial things that were happening were really because of the war with Spain. Even the early colonies were seen as a base for attacking Spain."

In 1600, Elizabeth I established a royal grant for the East India Company; this was not officially colonisation as such but it granted the company a monopoly over all English trade. This allowed England to economically dominate India for the next few centuries.



Canada

England captured Canada from France after the Seven Years' War in 1763, also known as the French and Indian War. As well as adding a massive landmass to the British Empire's bragging rights, Canada was a resource-rich country with ample trade of timber, ores and furs.

to [the British Empire] via their own indigenous roots. Indians have found their own story, which, understandably, looks at the British Empire in a very different light.

Equally, the peoples of the Caribbean have a story that is embedded in the slave past and the whole great swathes of Africans that came very quickly under imperial control from the 1870s onwards. All of that was done at the end of a sword or a gun with the ambition of exploiting the natural resources and the labour that went with it. So local people have come to the story later because they've only really woken up to the nature of history more recently.

RT: I think it would be good if there was more recognition or further attempts to bring to light those people who were the subjects of the empire. By that, I mean the ordinary people from a wide variety of different countries and with their particular experiences.

A lot of the historiography – and I include myself here – tends to focus on the views of those at the centre, so the colonial officials who were doing lots of record-keeping, and that the voices of those who experienced the empire when other people came and took over their countries and administered them are often lost.

> "The British don't really talk about the dark side of the empire that much because it doesn't look very favourable"

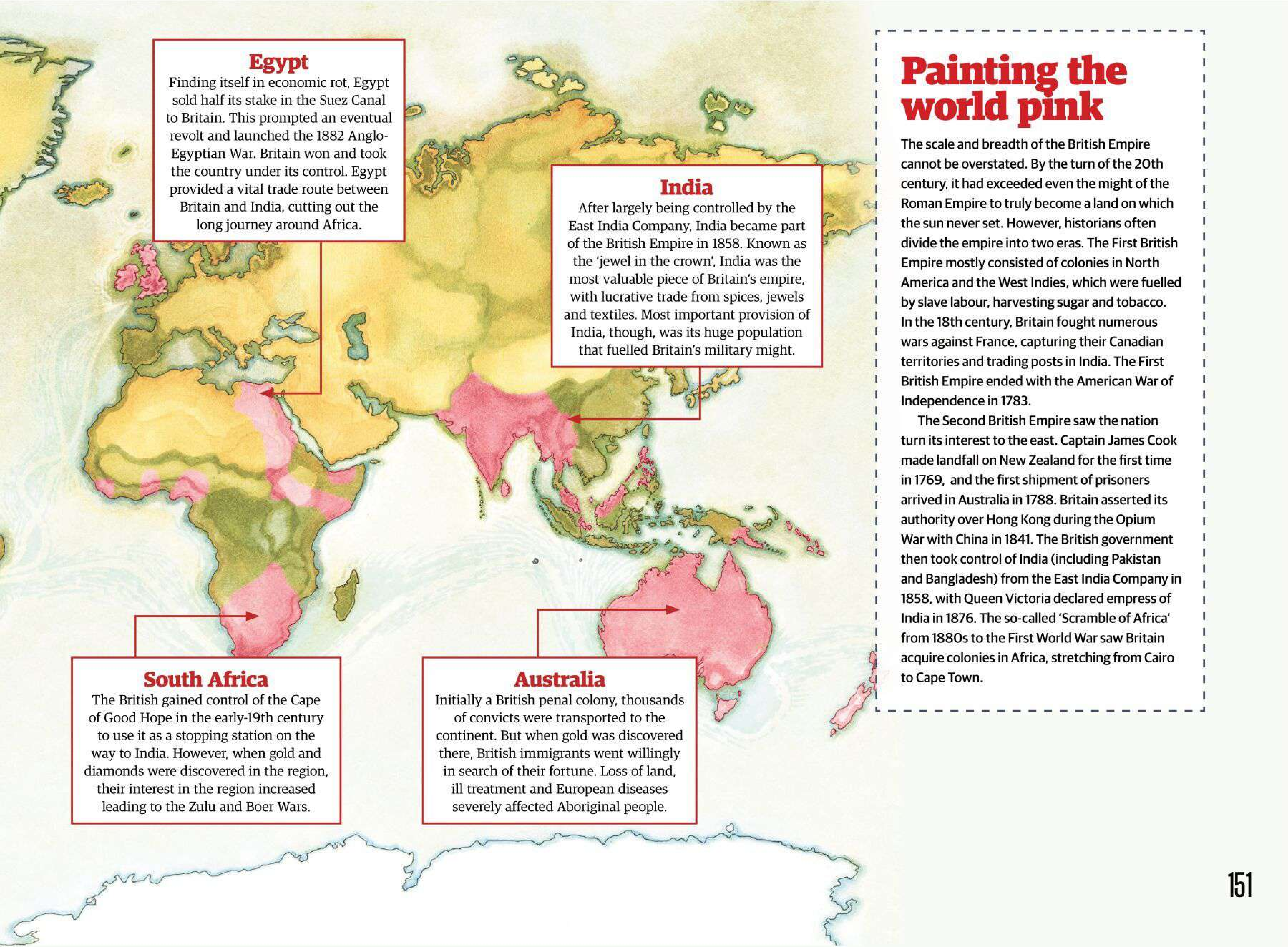
JB: The sort of things I teach a new set of students every year: that the British Empire was not like the Galactic Empire, it was not maintained by imperial stormtroopers. Yes, the Royal Navy was an awesome power and hugely influential, but its reach was limited. Influence occurred in a million other ways.

How fundamental was slavery to the birth of the British Empire?

JW: Slavery was really one of the key elements in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The British wealth was accumulated from trade in the Atlantic, Africa and the Caribbean, and that laid the basis for all kinds of imperial strength, like the rise of the great cities of Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow. Glasgow was built on tobacco that was cultivated by Africans and the sugar coming into London and Liverpool from the Caribbean was also important.

The empire had started before slavery. What the British did was plug into a slave system in the Atlantic that the Spanish and Portuguese had managed to perfect before them. We were latecomers to empire but once we got into our stride, we became the great pacemakers. Once we got involved, slavery became instrumental to the development of us as an imperial nation.

But, of course, that all runs parallel to another empire – the one in Asia, particularly India. If you



Egypt

Finding itself in economic rot, Egypt sold half its stake in the Suez Canal to Britain. This prompted an eventual revolt and launched the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian War. Britain won and took the country under its control. Egypt provided a vital trade route between Britain and India, cutting out the long journey around Africa.

India

After largely being controlled by the East India Company, India became part of the British Empire in 1858. Known as the 'jewel in the crown', India was the most valuable piece of Britain's empire, with lucrative trade from spices, jewels and textiles. Most important provision of India, though, was its huge population that fuelled Britain's military might.

South Africa

The British gained control of the Cape of Good Hope in the early-19th century to use it as a stopping station on the way to India. However, when gold and diamonds were discovered in the region, their interest in the region increased leading to the Zulu and Boer Wars.

Australia

Initially a British penal colony, thousands of convicts were transported to the continent. But when gold was discovered there, British immigrants went willingly in search of their fortune. Loss of land, ill treatment and European diseases severely affected Aboriginal people.

Painting the world pink

The scale and breadth of the British Empire cannot be overstated. By the turn of the 20th century, it had exceeded even the might of the Roman Empire to truly become a land on which the sun never set. However, historians often divide the empire into two eras. The First British Empire mostly consisted of colonies in North America and the West Indies, which were fuelled by slave labour, harvesting sugar and tobacco. In the 18th century, Britain fought numerous wars against France, capturing their Canadian territories and trading posts in India. The First British Empire ended with the American War of Independence in 1783.

The Second British Empire saw the nation turn its interest to the east. Captain James Cook made landfall on New Zealand for the first time in 1769, and the first shipment of prisoners arrived in Australia in 1788. Britain asserted its authority over Hong Kong during the Opium War with China in 1841. The British government then took control of India (including Pakistan and Bangladesh) from the East India Company in 1858, with Queen Victoria declared empress of India in 1876. The so-called 'Scramble of Africa' from 1880s to the First World War saw Britain acquire colonies in Africa, stretching from Cairo to Cape Town.

CHARLES I 1600-49

Colonies created by this monarch became havens for persecuted Puritans

After the union of the crowns brought England, Ireland and Scotland under the Stuarts' personal rule in 1603, Charles I continued the work of his father, James I, to expand his three kingdoms into a global power.

Once the Pilgrim Fathers had established the Plymouth colony as a place of refuge for Puritans in 1620, the Massachusetts Bay Colony soon followed in 1630. Carolina, not yet divided into North and South, was settled and named after the king and Maryland, which was intended as a place of sanctity for Catholics, followed in 1634. The colonisation of the Caribbean also picked up pace. Among others, St Kitts, Barbados and Nevis were all quickly settled.

What made the colonies more successful than early the Elizabethan attempts was the amount of ordinary people motivated to make the journey. The political situation in England was becoming increasingly acrimonious with civil war looming and there were also great plagues that were devastating the country. A new life in a faraway continent where there was more than enough land to go around seemed a welcome retreat.

think of these two things together, the British shipping Africans to the Americas and tapping their wealth and the wealth that they are acquiring from their activities in India, you have the two streams that go to shape this extraordinary powerhouse that was Britain in the late 18th century.

JB: If there had been no slavery, there would have been no slave trade and no British Empire as we know it. Murderous slave labour operations made the transformation of the Caribbean and the American southeast into a huge sugar factory possible – it multiplied Britain's productive land many times over.

That sugar and rum fuelled the British Empire and the resulting money further drove Britain. The slave trade and carrying trade and Royal and merchant navies funded and trained generations of British sailors.

SB: Slavery played a major role, of course. They say that the slaves were liberated but you also had indentured labour that followed. This was exactly like slavery because those [former slaves] couldn't go back home.

You got the indentured labour to go to the [British] Caribbean islands – and a lot of Indians went there from Eastern India as well – and they worked in the sugar cane fields but they could never return home. This replaced slavery but it was exactly the same, just with a different word – and yes, it built the empire.

Conversely, how fundamental or transformative to the British Empire was the battle to end slavery?

RT: I would say that there's often a lot of self-congratulation among the British, particularly politicians, about Britain's obviously important role in ending the slave trade. However, there isn't much acknowledgement of its role in promoting it in the first place.

SB: All you hear about the abolition is William Wilberforce but abolition also happened because black people themselves fought against it and that's a story we don't hear. It wasn't just the [British] giving it away. There was a lot of rioting and enough resistance so they had to give it away – that's a story we also need to know and it's waiting to be told.

JW: I think we need to get back to a much more old-fashioned way of thinking about slavery and the fact that it ended clean across the Americas for a lot of very complex factors. First of all, the slaves themselves constantly shook their shackles – they wanted out of this, they wanted to be free. Sometimes, that took the form of revolt or just working slowly.

But slavery came to an end in a very short space of time partly because the Europeans lost confidence in it and in what they were doing. They were beginning to realise that slavery was morally tainted in a way that they hadn't really thought of before.

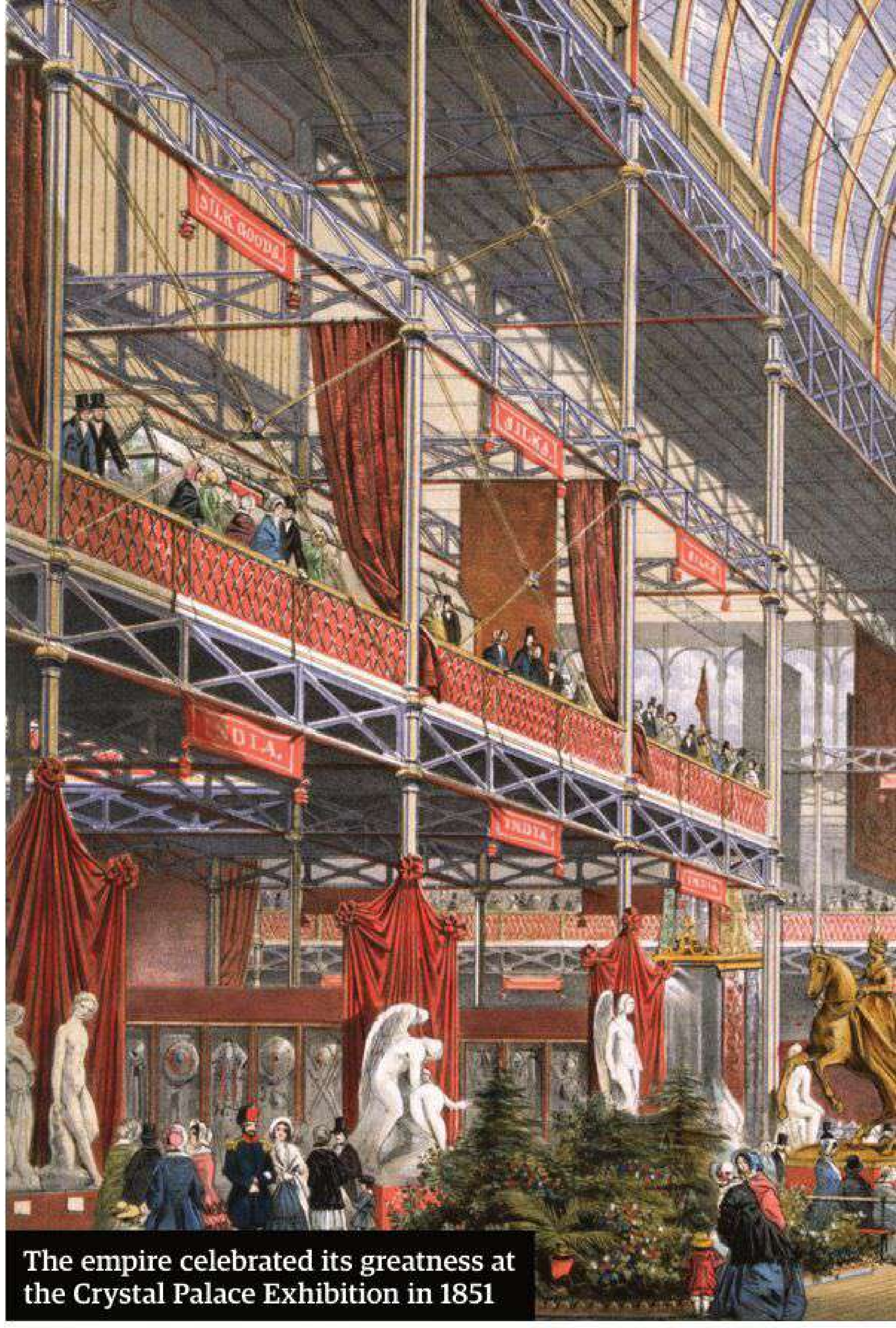
I don't think there's any doubt that the British thought slavery was wrong in 1833. Over 1.3 million people from all walks of life signed petitions against it and that hadn't happened in 1733 or 1633. Something had changed.

The British people became much more influenced by nonconformity, Baptists, missionaries, aspects of Anglicanism. They also came to believe in the rights of man – it's the age of revolution, the ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality, all of those issues that had come from the French and American revolutions, and they became blended between 1780 and 1830. It was a 50-year period where what they saw in the Americas was deeply tainted and what gave that feeling a much sharper edge was learning about the way in which the slaves were actually being treated in the Caribbean and the Americas.

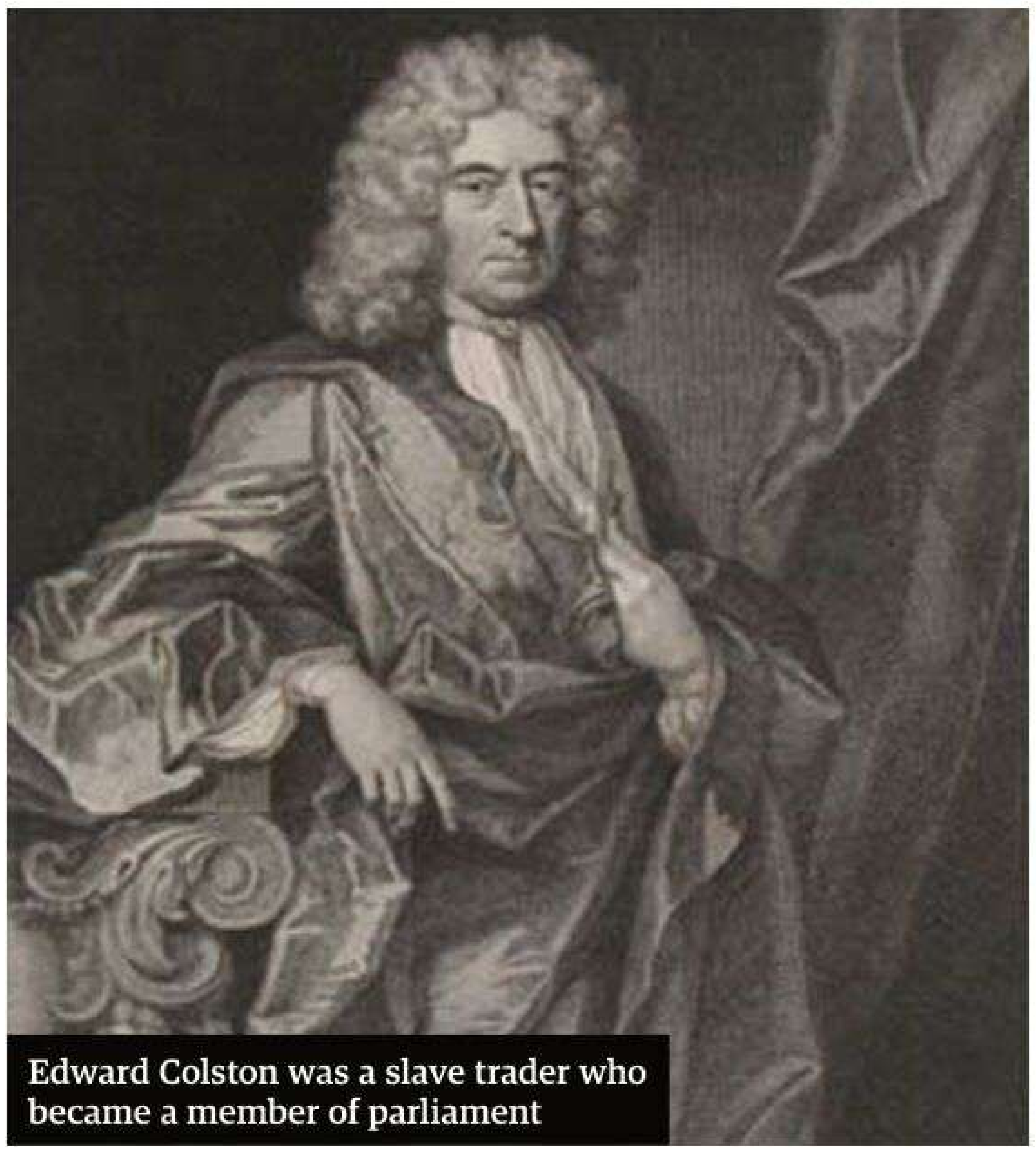
To start with, more and more people were becoming literate and there was also more cheap print available – a lot of British citizens could now read about slavery. Missionaries, fresh from Jamaica, came back to the United Kingdom to tell the stories about the violation of slaves in crowded churches and there was a building sense of a moral outrage about this. If you think about it, ending slavery was an extraordinary transformation. What's interesting is that not only did the British decide they didn't want anything more to do with slavery for a whole host of complex reasons, but that they then became abolitionists in an imperial sense.

The British wanted to embark on abolition as an aspect of their imperialism and to do so they had to oblige other people to become abolitionists in the way they were. They tried to persuade the French, the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the Americans by treaty, and they tried to convince the Africans by force and diplomacy.

Everyone must accord to British abolition – the poacher of the 18th century became the gamekeeper of the 19th century and the irony is that Britain's conversion to abolition became a key element in its determination to impose empire in



The empire celebrated its greatness at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851



Edward Colston was a slave trader who became a member of parliament

> "The slaves themselves constantly shook their shackles"

other parts of the world. For instance, they had to make sure that the Africans didn't become slavers, and to do that they had to control them.

SB: We should ensure that we never discount the role played by the English liberals not just in slavery, but also in opposing colonialism. There were a lot of people who were against what was happening and they helped India. They were on the other side, assisting the freedom struggle, and I appreciate the efforts and the contributions that they made.

We also have to remember to look at things as a two-way relationship – the situation is never in black and white. We really need to make sure that we understand and give respect where it's due.

JB: The battle to end slavery was extremely transformative to the British Empire. We just have to look to the Royal Navy's suppression of the slave trade on the west and later east coasts of Africa to see the roots of military humanitarian intervention that we still have today.

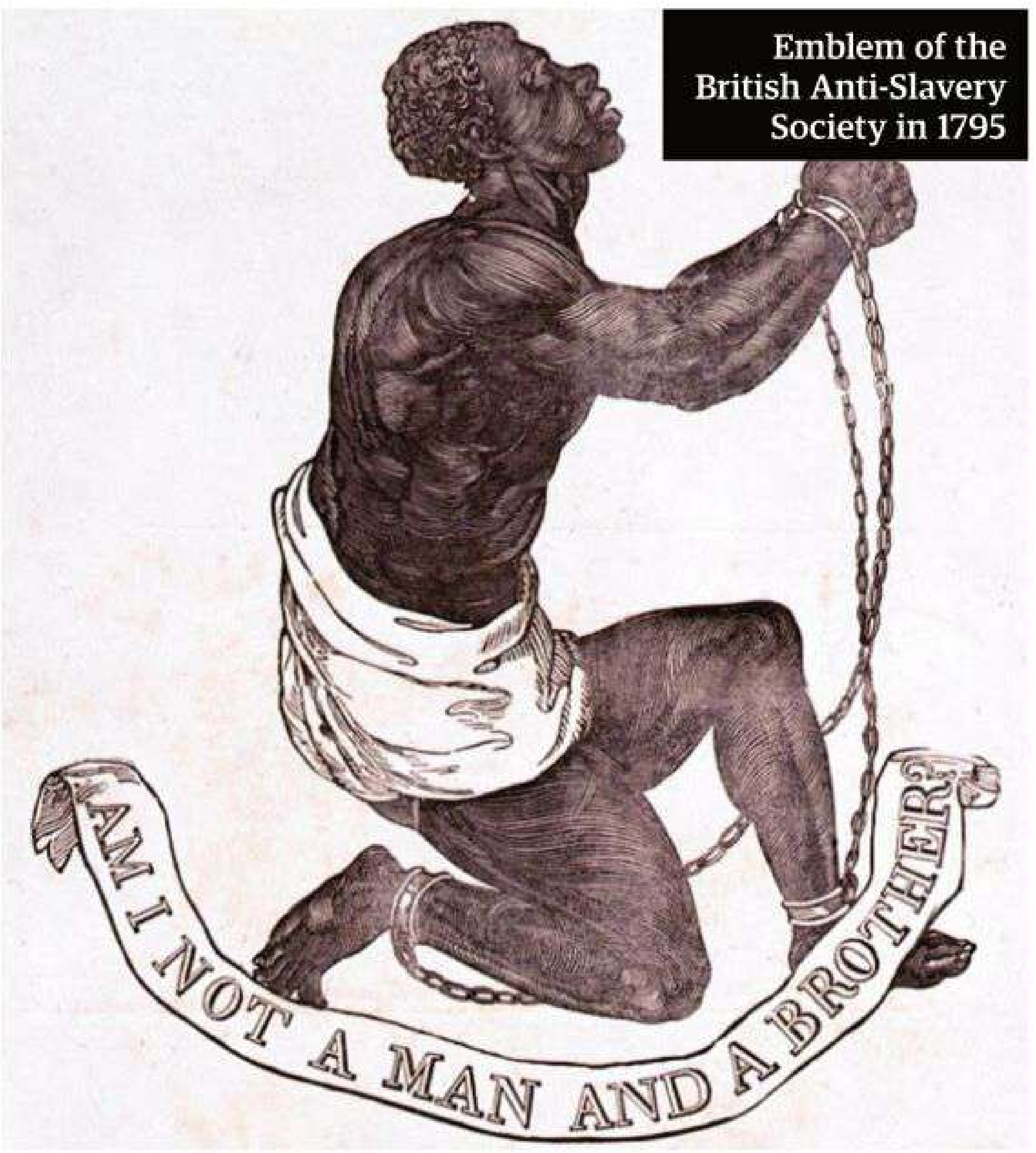
As cynical as we tend to be, and as critically as we want to examine all British imperial history, the sacrifices of British and African (Kroomen) sailors on these stations were great and the expenditure from the British treasure very high.

From the Royal African Company in the 17th century to the East India Company in the 18th to Cecil Rhodes in the 19th, the engine of the British Empire was enterprise. How responsible, then, was the British state?

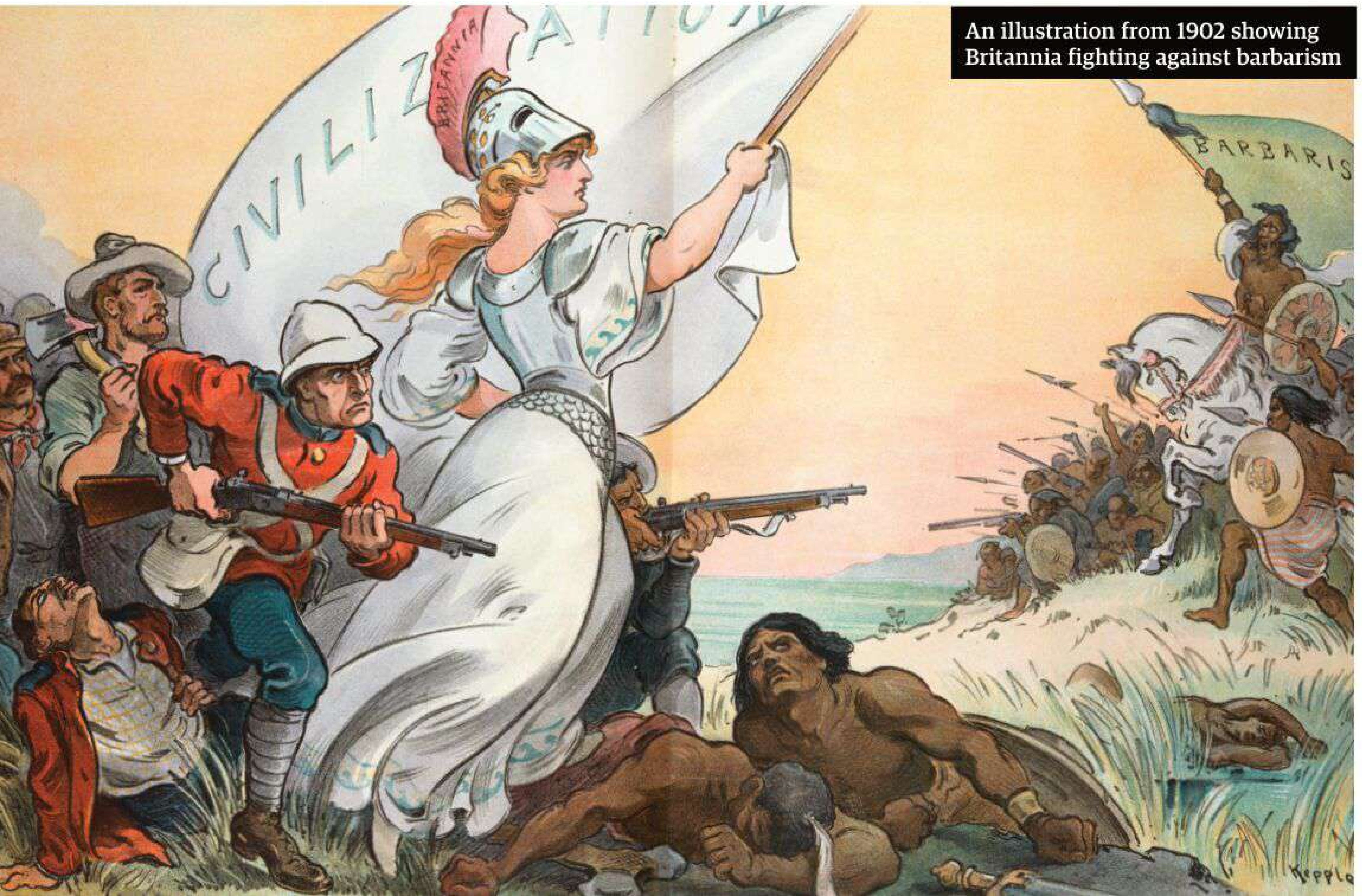
JW: This wasn't just an economic phenomenon. I mean, it was the rise of great economic systems but it was encouraged at all points by the British state. Acts of Parliament controlled this – the Navigation Acts dictated what could and couldn't be carried in British ships. The Royal Navy developed in the 18th century and was used in the Atlantic as well as in Asia and the Indian Ocean to safeguard the interests of the British state, which was actively involved in this.

It's not as if the British were innocent bystanders, just watching companies get on with it – they had colonial officials, armies, militia and Royal Navy depots in place. What they were doing was making sure that Britain's economic interests were safeguarded by whatever means necessary. In the 18th century, that meant going to war, so the conflicts with the French were a battle between two great empires in India and the Atlantic for dominance that would yield economic benefits to the victor.

RT: Well, as with anything, it was a combination of factors. There were those who felt as though they had moral imperatives to civilise things that


AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?

Emblem of the British Anti-Slavery Society in 1795



An illustration from 1902 showing Britannia fighting against barbarism

GEORGE III

1738-1820

Under this much-maligned king, the empire was realigned from West to East

'Mad King George' is often blamed for losing the 13 American colonies but this is unfair. By the 18th century, the sovereign relied on their Whig and Tory ministers in an increasingly constitutional monarchy and George was suffering from what we now know was porphyria, a serious mental condition.

One of the most pressing issues following the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 3 September 1783 – when the US formally gained independence – was where to send convicts who had previously been shipped across the Atlantic. The loss of America also meant problems for the economic activity of the Caribbean since Britain no longer had a base on the continent.

By the end of George III's reign in 1820, Britain had overcome these issues and made its empire even more powerful. Australia had become a new home for transported convicts and the Far East was now the powerhouse. Cotton and silk were taken back to Britain and used in the factories of new industrial towns in the north. The Caribbean became irrelevant as extracting homegrown sugar from the beet became far more profitable than importing it, and slavery became both economically untenable and morally repugnant to many people in Britain.

By 1700, the slave trade accounted for 80 per cent of Britain's foreign income

By 1700, sugar production on the British Caribbean islands had reached 25,000 tons. By 1750, sugar exporters were producing 150,000 tons of sugar, 36,000 tons of which came from Jamaica alone

The triangular slave trade

Seeing the success of Portuguese and Spanish slave traders, British sailors followed suit from the 1640s. A brutally efficient trade triangle was soon established, with British slave traders repeating a three-legged journey. They would set out to the west coast of Africa, where they exchanged captured men, women and children for European goods like guns, textiles and alcohol.

With a cargo of enslaved Africans, traders would cross the Middle Passage of the Atlantic over six to eight weeks. Up to 20 per cent of those chained in the holds of the slave ships died before they even reached their destination. In the Caribbean, those Africans who had survived the treacherous journey would be sold at slave markets for huge profits. Traders used this money to buy cash crops that could be sold back home, including coffee, tobacco, sugar and later cotton – all of which were products of slave labour.

Between 1695 and 1807, 10,600 slave ships set sail from English ports, with 50 per cent sailing from Liverpool alone. The exact number of Africans transported to the Americas as slaves is hotly debated, with estimates as high as 28 million. In the 18th century alone, perhaps 6 million Africans were taken to the Americas as slaves, at least a third of them in British ships.

from our perspective might not look like genuine morality but were nonetheless deeply felt at the time – though how effectively that was done is a different question.

I certainly think it's important to emphasise that the British Empire can't just been seen as being centrally run and directed from London, where a decision was made by the men in Whitehall and then immediately implemented in the colonies or in India.

This was, of course, a time of slow communication and therefore an important principle was that things should be left to the man on the spot. However, that left a big window of opportunity for traders and businessmen to get a foothold in places where authorities may not necessarily have been wholly comfortable with what they were doing but they didn't really see a very powerful reason – or perhaps didn't even have the power – to stop it from happening.

> "It's not simply the case that every time there was decolonisation it was accompanied by huge waves of violence"

JB: The responsibility was mixed. The British state had its own Crown Colonies and later the Indian Empire, for which it was directly responsible. It was authoritative, too, in that it granted monopolies or other concessions to semi-private colonial operations. But yes, sometimes a great deal of blame for the horrors belongs to individual people – like Cecil Rhodes, an express global white supremacist.

SB: It was built entirely [on] cotton. Manchester and Lancashire were big industrial areas and they grew on the strength of the textile industry and Indian cotton coming in, but also at the expense of Indian production because the local industry was then killed.

You could write so many books on how the British destroyed the entire cotton spinning industry in India. Weavers were put out of a job, so real lasting damage that was done.

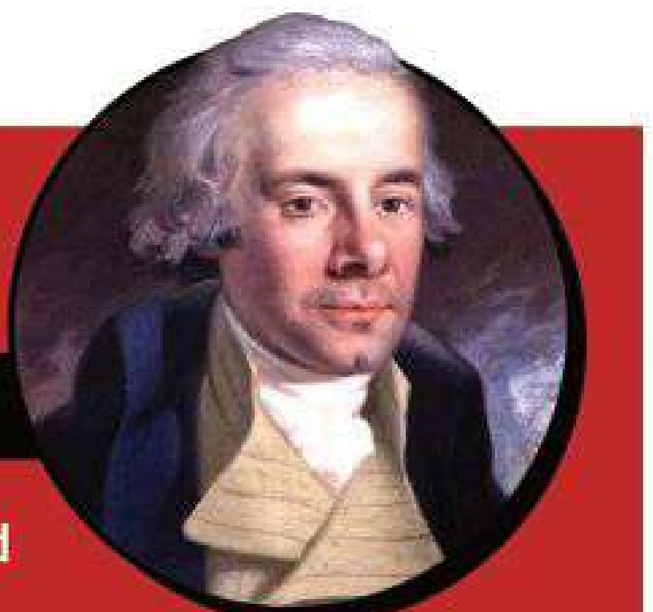
The late Victorian view of the British Empire was that it was this great 'civilising' mission. In your opinion, how successful was it?

RT: That's a bit of a loaded question because the Victorian concept of civilisation may not have been entirely welcomed by the people who were on the receiving end. If you look at it simply in terms of building infrastructure, then the Victorians were certainly quite successful – whether that served any great benefit to the people who lived in the conquered countries is much more questionable, though.

I think that if you were really to take the question literally of if they succeeded, it's basically asking to what extent did they really manage to convert the rest of the empire to the British values of the time. To that, you have to say that the decolonisation phase shows that, at the very least, the British had failed to win significant elements of those societies to their side. If the British had really adhered to what they wanted in terms of their effects on the indigenous people, the empire would presumably still be going in some form today.

JW: The empire was successful in the sense that it brought hundreds of millions of people together

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE 1759-1833

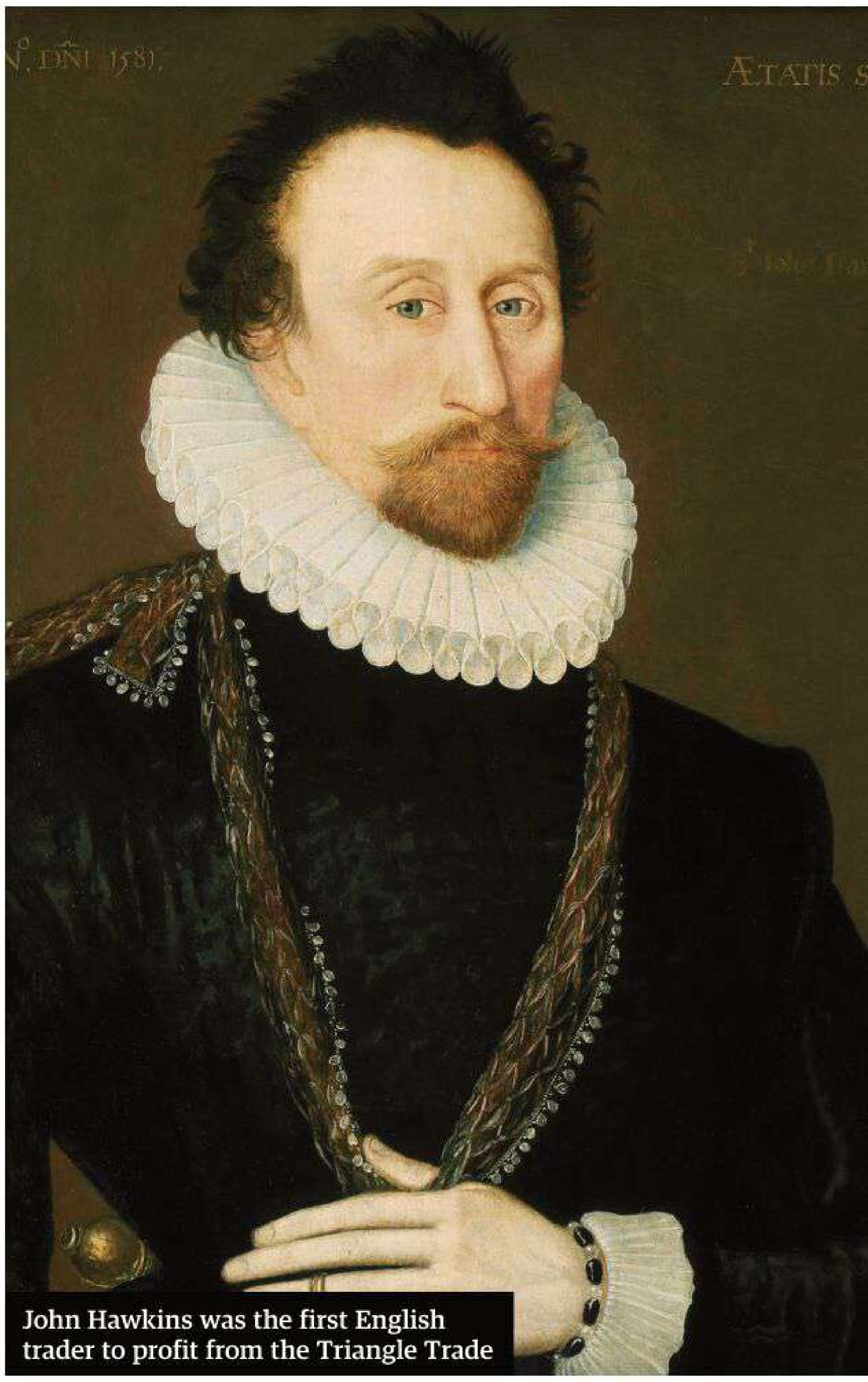


An evangelist who was key in securing the abolition of the slave trade

The son of a merchant from Yorkshire, Wilberforce campaigned for the abolition of slavery from his earliest days but only became interested in politics while at Cambridge University. It was here that he met with two people who would become instrumental in his fight for abolition: the future Tory leader and prime minister William Pitt the Younger and the aristocrat Thomas Babington, whose manor house in the Leicestershire village of Rothley would provide a welcome retreat for them to draft the historic anti-slavery legislation.

Wilberforce allegedly spent £8,000 on his campaign to become independent Member of Parliament for Kingston upon Hull but soon became disillusioned at having run for office for personal gain. He met the cleric John Newton, who had been a slave overseer on the Gold Coast and was horrified by what he had seen. The writings of James Ramsay – a doctor and preacher who had spent 19 years living on the Caribbean island of St Kitts – also had a profound effect on him.

Wilberforce soon had an epiphany: abolishing the slave trade, he felt, was God's mission for him. As an independent Member of Parliament he sided with Whigs and Tories, working with both to achieve the abolition of both the slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in 1833.



John Hawkins was the first English trader to profit from the Triangle Trade

under one flag – the imperial British flag. You can't look at a map of the world in 1914 and not say that the exercise wasn't a success – the whole world seems to be pink!

In fact, that was one of my first memories of learning about the empire in primary school: looking at maps and the teacher saying, "This is ours." Great swathes of India, the Americas – it was ours. It included the Commonwealth countries, of course, and so if empire is successful in terms of its spread around the world and control, then the British Empire triumphed.

How you calibrate the empire's success in terms of 'civilising', however, I don't know because it also brutalised. It imposed certain political, educational and language systems on native peoples at the gunpoint.

SB: It wasn't – it was purely a money-making exercise. From the beginning to the end, it was all about the money. I mean, you can justify it by saying that the British were on a civilising mission, and I'm sure they believed that, but it is actually completely untrue.

JB: Violence and coercion can never be civilising.

The process of decolonisation was often bloody and chaotic. To use India as an example, do you believe the former 'imperial' powers have a responsibility to 'manage' the outcome, or was the 'correct' thing to do to step back?

RT: I think it was a catch-22 in the sense that it's always possible to say that decisions could have been taken better and that the bloody violence of partition could really have been averted. Could it have been minimised or made less awful? Well maybe, but you've got to remember that there were peaceful handovers, too. It's not simply the case that every time there was decolonisation it was accompanied by huge waves of violence.

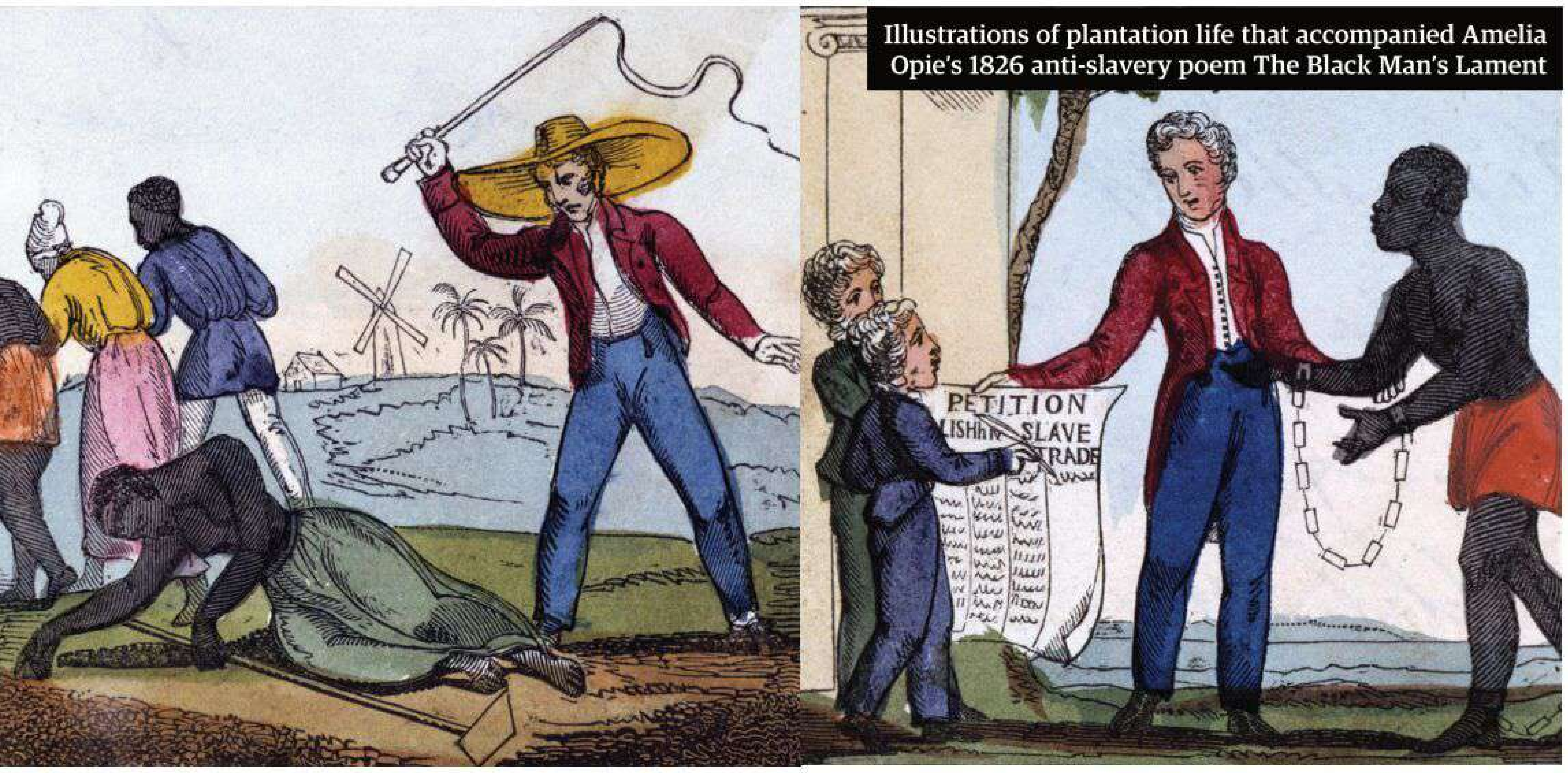
In the case of India, I think that it's incredibly difficult to see how the British could have extracted themselves without that occurring. Of course, the point is that the British themselves had quite consciously stoked up the communal tensions between the different ethnic and religious groups in India as a policy of dividing and ruling over the decades. If the British had been more receptive to Indian nationalism earlier on and had been prepared to work more a little more constructively at an earlier stage, perhaps things could have turned out differently.

By the end of World War II, the British really were in a catch-22. The Labour government [of 1945-51 under Clement Attlee] sincerely wanted to withdraw for very good, practical reasons; its hands were tied really in terms of needing to speed things up. It's difficult to see if those tensions that were already so high could have been permanently suppressed.

JW: It is a catch-22, I think. I'm not sure that the British handled the ending of the Indian Empire well and that may be partly due to Louis Mountbatten, the governor-general of India. There was a certain kind of arrogance to the man that tainted the way he ordered withdrawal from India and partition but I'm not sure that the outcome would have been any less violent.

It looks as if what happened was a concoction of circumstances, made worse by Mountbatten and also the doggedness of Muhammad Ali Jinnah not making concessions when he needed to. Whether it had to be quite as violent as it was is difficult to say.

JB: The horror of empire is that it almost always ends the way it did in India, and if you break it, you own it. It's not simply that the British executed their withdrawal there, or from Palestine or areas of Africa, poorly – it's that during their rule, they



Illustrations of plantation life that accompanied Amelia Opie's 1826 anti-slavery poem The Black Man's Lament created conditions that favoured such blood-letting. It was their divide-and-conquer techniques, the suppression of democratic movements, and the systematic underdevelopment of industry, education, electrification and so forth.

SB: I think [the British] were responsible. They stood back and watched the rioting and they were there. It was their responsibility to ensure a smooth transfer and to look after the situation. The police were part of the British police before this but Pakistan didn't have a police force after the partition.

While the administrators were transitioning, they had nothing over there – it's not a situation that you can just walk away from after 200 years. The police were given instructions to look after the British and make sure they weren't hurt in the riots. It's completely outrageous, really.

Another example is the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the carving up of the Middle East. In your opinion, could Britain have known about the divisions that would result, or is that only capable with hindsight?

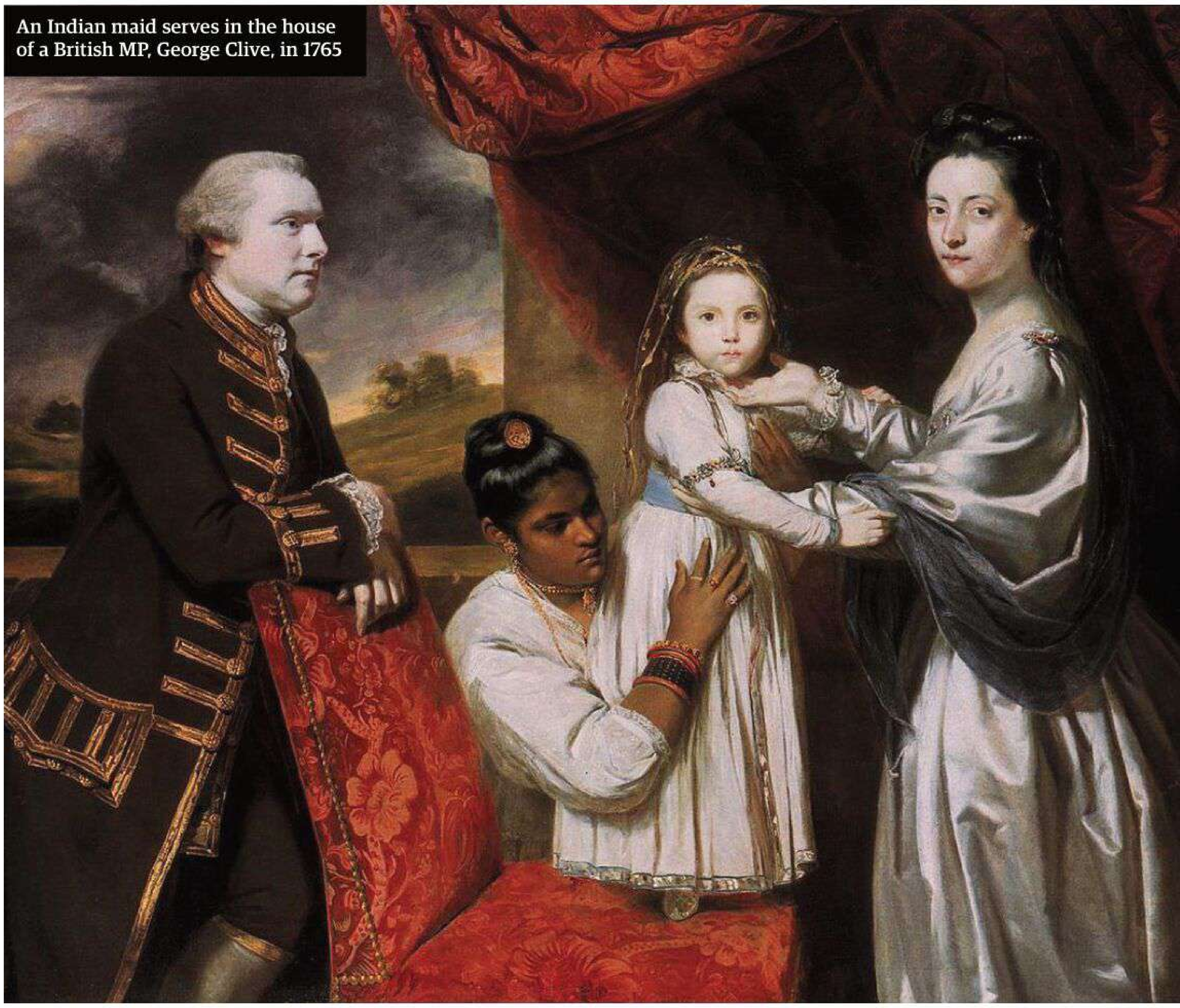
JW: Had they known what was to happen now, I doubt it would have occurred – but who could have predicted that there would be warfare from 1948? Who could have known when the Balfour Declaration was made that Hitler would do what he did to European Jews?

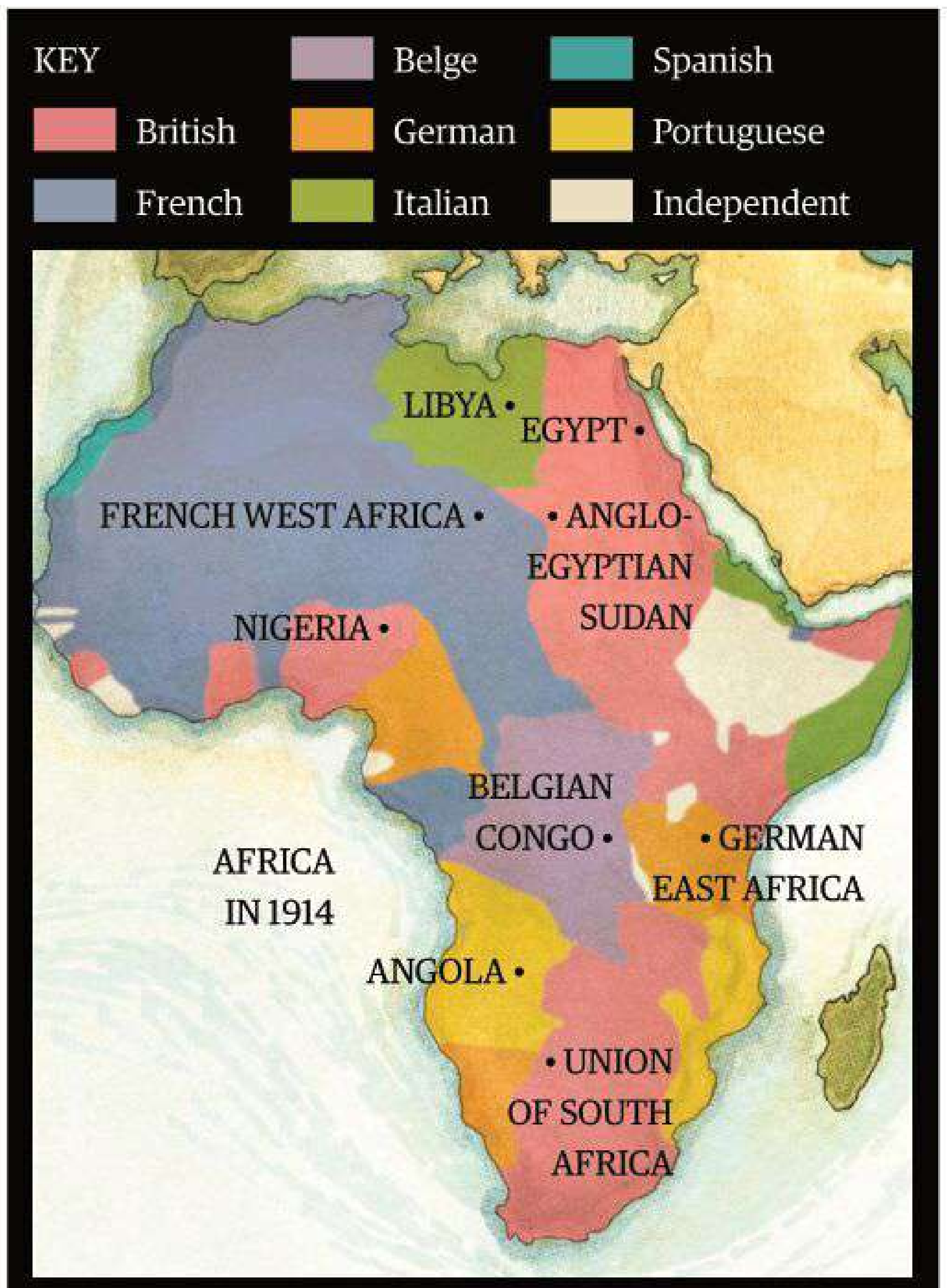
No one knew that the Final Solution was going to come and alter the whole game plan. Who in their right mind could even have thought that would happen? It looked a generous offer to the Zionists but it was made at the expense of others and I don't think it was fully appreciated just how costly it would be to the Arabs.

RT: It's not as if everybody thought that the Balfour Declaration was a brilliant idea. Edwin Montagu was secretary of state for India from 1917 to 1922 and although he was Jewish, he was strongly opposed to it because he resented the Zionist idea that Jews ought to live in a special nation with the possible risk that they'd be seen as not being legitimate or come under attack in the countries that they'd originally been born in.

Put it this way: it wasn't obvious to everyone that this would be unproblematic. I'm not saying Montagu foresaw the precise issues that emerged in terms of the resentment between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine and he probably couldn't have predicted what that was going to involve, but I think it would take enormous foresight to realise that doing this could be dubious.

The British did wake up to the full difficulties of it to some extent in the 1920s and they did try to carry out a balancing act. The wording of the

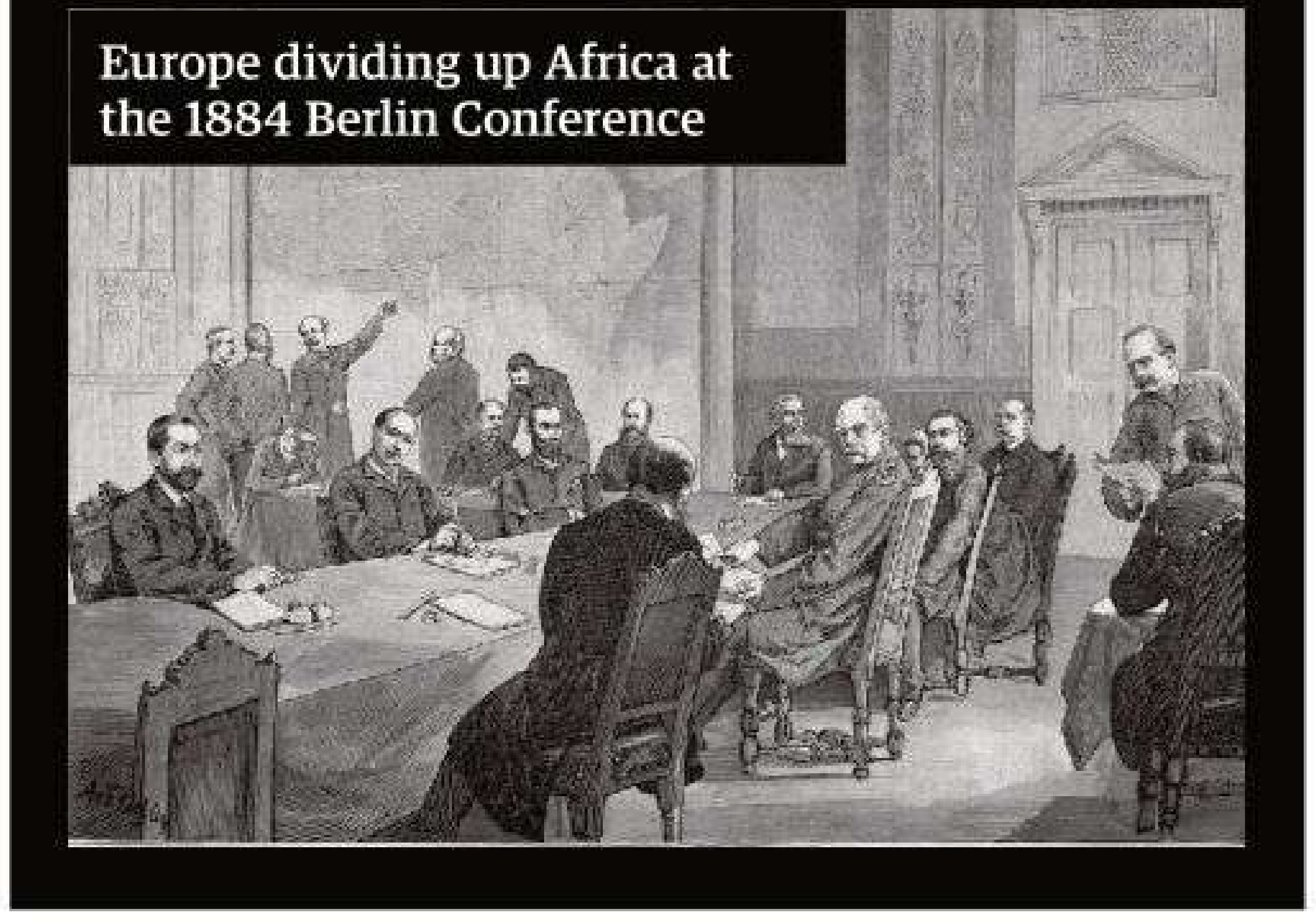

An Indian maid serves in the house of a British MP, George Clive, in 1765

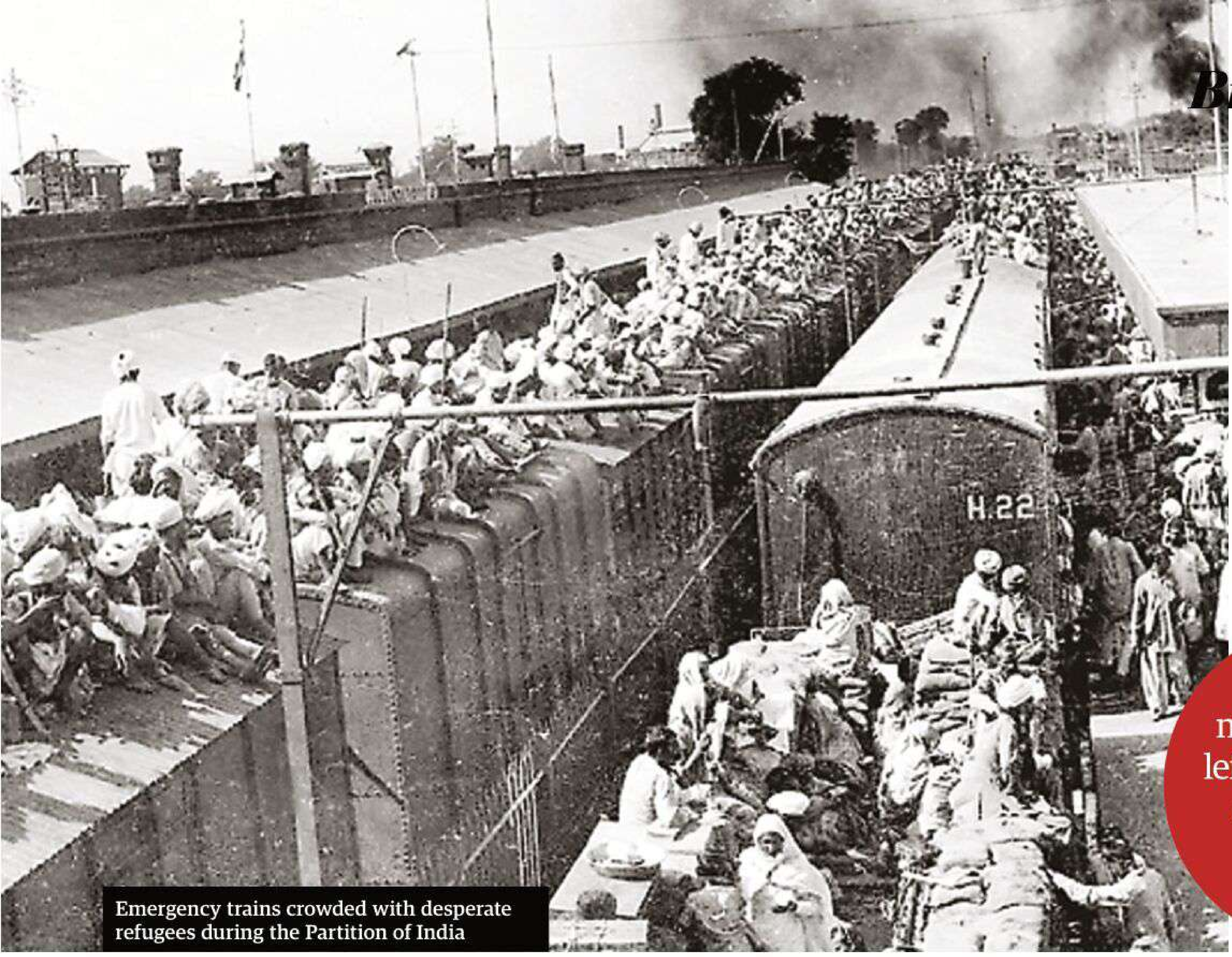


The scramble for Africa

Britain's role in Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries was not colonial, per se – they secured strategic ports on the West Coast for easily transporting African slaves across the Atlantic. But this began to change in the 19th century. In 1806, the British permanently captured the Cape Colony (modern-day South Africa), a former Dutch territory. Sierra Leone followed in 1808, accompanied by the Gambia in 1816, Lagos in 1861 and the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana) in 1874. What motivated Britain was a rivalry with other European countries for cultural, religious and economic dominance of the continent and after the success of the abolitionist movement, a desire to prevent slavery being practised either by rival powers or by Africans themselves.

But it wasn't until the 1880s that events picked up pace. Rival countries became spooked about each other's intentions for the continent, particularly plans for transnational railways through adjourning colonies: the French hoped to build a trans-Saharan railway, the British wanted a line from Cape to Cairo, and the Portuguese wished to connect their so-called rose-coloured map stretching from Angola in the east to Mozambique in the west. A series of bloody battles ensued between Britain, the indigenous Africans and other European settlers that included the two Boer Wars in southern Africa and the Mahdist War in Sudan.


Europe dividing up Africa at the 1884 Berlin Conference



Emergency trains crowded with desperate refugees during the Partition of India

> "The horror of empire is that it almost always ends the way it did in India, and if you break it, you own it"

declaration states that "the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political" must be maintained. Of course, people were aware that there was a non-Jewish population but the British should arguably have shown more foresight.

JB: No, there were plenty of people who could have told them that there was a Palestinian Arab and pan-Arab nationalism extent in the area at the time of the Balfour Declaration and that they were making an implicit choice to favour the Jews. When the British and Indians drove the Ottomans out of Palestine, in other words, there were a lot of excited young dreamers envisioning a free or federated Arab nation just as there were those picturing a Jewish nation.

SB: Every problem in the world has at some point been caused by Britain. I think it's a heavy burden that it has to accept responsibility for.

What positive achievement of the British Empire – if you believe it has any – is the most significant?

JW: The English language, English legal systems in certain parts of the world and certain kinds of democracy, although they weren't always suitable – but how you balance these achievements against the disadvantages is hard to say.

If you look at a map of Africa with its straight lines and rectangles divided up into countries that owe no loyalty to those lines whatsoever, it's difficult to determine if the harm that came with that, riding roughshod over tribal, ethnic divisions, is actually counterbalanced by the fact that they were taught in English and were given certain parliamentary procedures. It is a very precarious balance.

RT: I think I'm going to say none, because if you start to talk about all the positives and negatives and begin weighing things up... that's not particularly helpful for the historical understanding of what went on. It's problematic because you can get to a situation where it's very tempting to go down a route where people say, "Well yes, there were quite a few massacres and there were famines and there was slavery – but on the upside we built loads of bridges and railways, and we spread the rule of law. On balance, can't we say that the British Empire on the whole was rather a good thing?"

I think that's a line of thought that many people find compelling, and yet I feel as though it reinforces a lot of cosy assumptions that the British may have about themselves. What sounds like a fair approach can end up whitewashing some of the darker episodes.

When trying to look for some light, I suppose that one can point to the positive relations between many of the countries in the Commonwealth and perhaps there is or has been some goodwill from them.

I don't want to go down the route of saying that the history of the British Empire was just nonstop massacres, which is over the top, but the legacy of the empire has been very problematic. But this isn't to say that everything

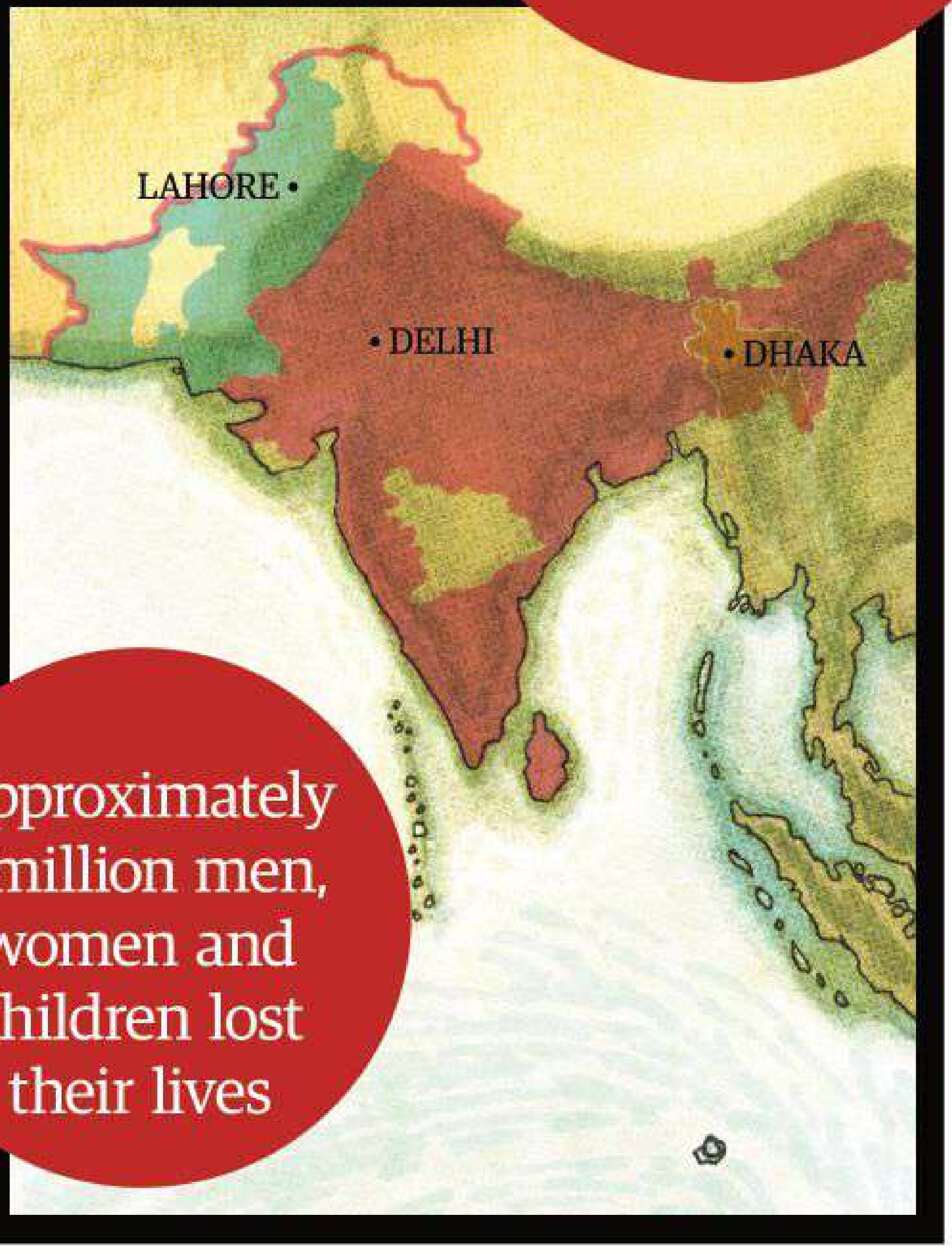
The Partition of India

After World War II, there were more calls for Indian independence than ever before. Clement Attlee, the British prime minister, was determined to oversee independence following his election in 1945, realising that India could no longer be supported and that it was at boiling point. While most Indians were Hindus, about one-quarter were Muslims and Sikhs made up a significant minority. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Hindu leader of the pro-independence Congress, and Mahatma Gandhi, who encouraged non-violent methods, fell out with Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah increasingly pushed for a second independent Islamic state. A compromise – to create one federalised country – was rejected by Nehru, who feared it would leave India ungovernable. Some historians argue that the British wanted a two-state solution as Congress were unlikely to have allowed Britain to maintain troops to protect Asia from Communist influence. With no agreement, Britain proposed borders that arbitrarily chopped up the religiously mixed and wealthy Bengal and Punjab regions.

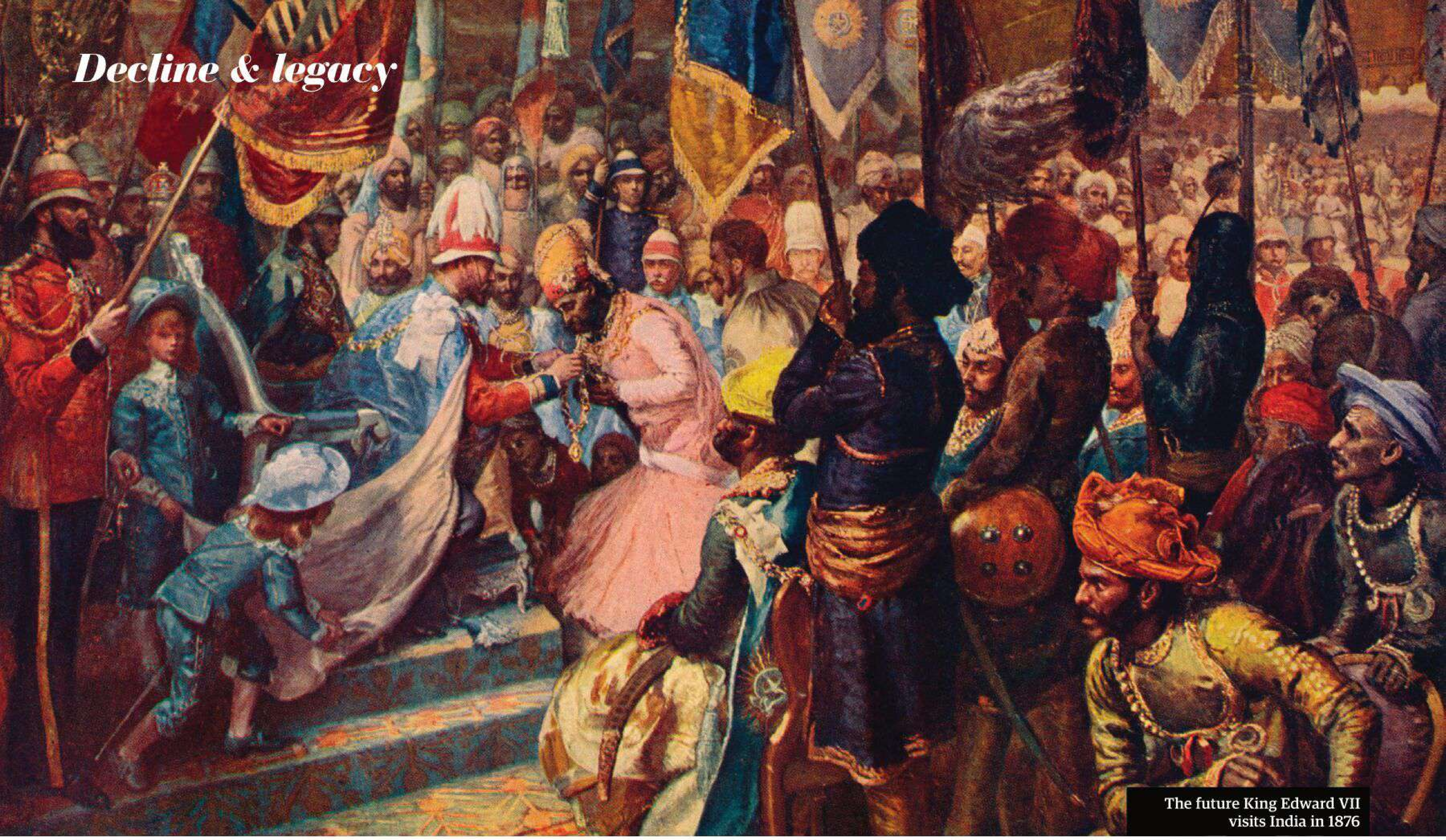
These plans were kept secret until after Independence Day on 15 August 1947. Violence soon erupted on all sides. Of the 899,000 Muslims that attempted to migrate by foot and train, between 500,000 and 800,000 died trying to enter West Punjab (Pakistan). 1.25 million non-Muslims moved to the Indian side of the Punjab. Those who didn't die of starvation or exhaustion were slaughtered by rival sides.

Up to 17 million people left their homes and became refugees overnight

Roughly 5.5 million Hindus and Sikhs escaped to India in 1947-48, while 5.8 Muslims fled to Pakistan



Approximately 1 million men, women and children lost their lives



The future King Edward VII visits India in 1876

that has gone wrong in decolonised countries since they have left the empire necessarily has to be laid wholly at the feet of the British.

JB: I think it's a categorical error to speak of the achievements of empire. By all means, we should study hard and regard the consequences of the British Empire, but celebrating them is not only not good history, it also threatens to mask its coercive nature.

We're glad that the two Africa Squadrons diverted or blocked hundreds of thousands from spending their lives in slavery, for example, but there would have been no transatlantic or Indian slave trade without imperialism. All of these things can't be disentangled.

SB: I think we just have the consequences. We have a huge Indian diaspora – is that an advantage? Who knows? Indians often had no choice – they came to Britain for jobs in the factories and these are all consequences.

We [South Asians] are all children of empire. Did we ask for it? No, but we are. Whatever has happened since then is what has happened in history. We speak English like our mother tongue and we've forgotten our own original language – is that a good thing? No it's not, but it has happened and we can't change that.

Of the British Empire's darker legacy, what do you believe to be its single greatest shame?

JW: There are so many of them: the governance and violence in India, the ending of the empire in India, the wars in Africa to secure it, although I do think that the British getting out of Africa was much less troublesome than it could have been.

I think the Atlantic slave trade must be up there among the top of the greatest shames, though. Again, that's not by way of apology, that's just fact. 12 million people being shipped onto slave ships over a period of 200-300 years is a spectacular crime not merely to Africa but to the individuals involved and what happened to them in the Americas. That's really as dark an episode as you'd care to find.

JB: Take your pick: slavery, robbery, wars of rapacity and arbitrary horrors like the Victorian famine responses in India. The list goes on.

RT: Well, I think that slavery would probably have to be the obvious one.

SB: It's the exploitation of people for material gains to the extent that you hang anyone who opposes it. You kill them, you destroy their country – what could be worse than that?

> "12 million people being shipped onto slave ships over a period of 200-300 years is a spectacular crime"

CECIL RHODES

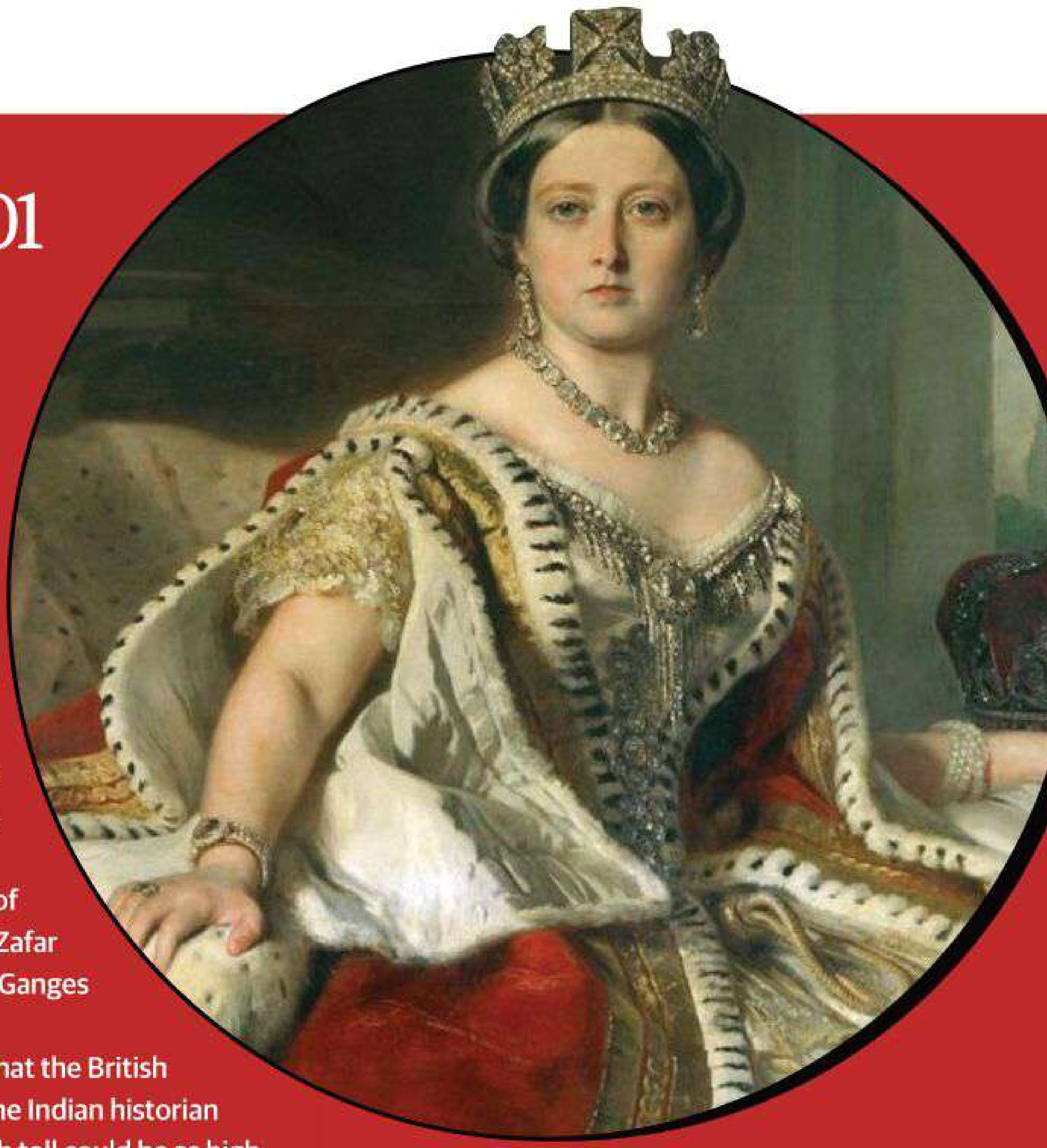
1853-1902

The imperialist who helped sow the seeds of racial discrimination in South Africa

Born in Hertfordshire, England, Rhodes went to work on his brothers' cotton farm in Natal, north of the Cape Colony at the age of 17. He returned to study at Oxford University before setting up De Beers Mining Company, one of the most successful diamond companies in the world. Under Rhodes' leadership, the firm subjected black Africans to dangerous and appalling working conditions that have been compared to slavery. His will includes stipulations for part of his vast fortune to be spent on a controversial scholarship for Oxford students.

Rhodes' desire to create a unified South African state under Britain at the expense of other ethnic and religious groups has led many historians to brand him a white supremacist. As prime minister of Cape Colony, he introduced the Franchise and Ballot Act in 1892 that restricted the vote to those with high levels of education and wealth, largely excluding black and poor people from electoral representation and The Glen Grey Act of 1894, which created African-only settlements, effectively introducing segregation.

In 1895, Rhodes tried to provoke an uprising by British workers in the South African republic of Transvaal called the Jameson Raid but this failed spectacularly and raised many of the tensions between Britain and the Dutch that led to the Second Boer War.



QUEEN VICTORIA 1819-1901

The empress of India presided over the peak of British imperial power

During Queen Victoria's 63-year reign, the British Empire grew and changed irrevocably at home and abroad. Cities like Manchester and Birmingham evolved through industrialisation and the creation of revolutionary railways lines, which allowed for the transportation of goods around the country in the same day.

The railways were funded not just by archetypical Victorian capitalists who had made their profits from buying commodities in the new Far East colonies and then making them back home, but also by a new lower-middle class that had indirectly benefited from the profits of empire and had become valuable shareholders in a modernised economy.

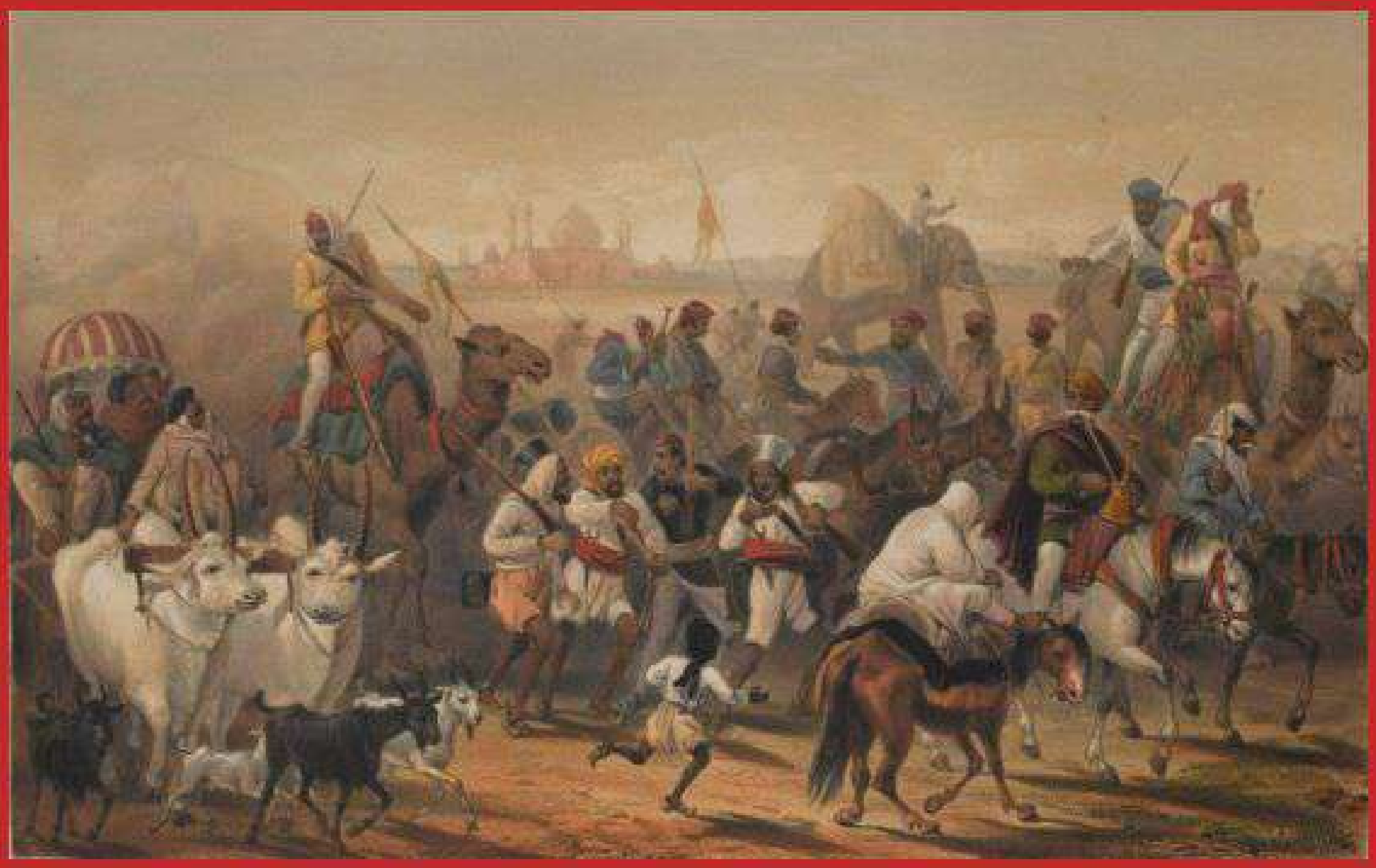
The monarchy was now firmly on the path towards constitutionalism, so Queen Victoria was more of a symbol of empire than a major player like her Stuart predecessors. A state in Australia bears her name and Victoria's capital is named after her first prime minister, Viscount Melbourne. There is also a Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, and Victoria was the name of the capital of colonial Hong Kong, leased by Britain from China until 1997.

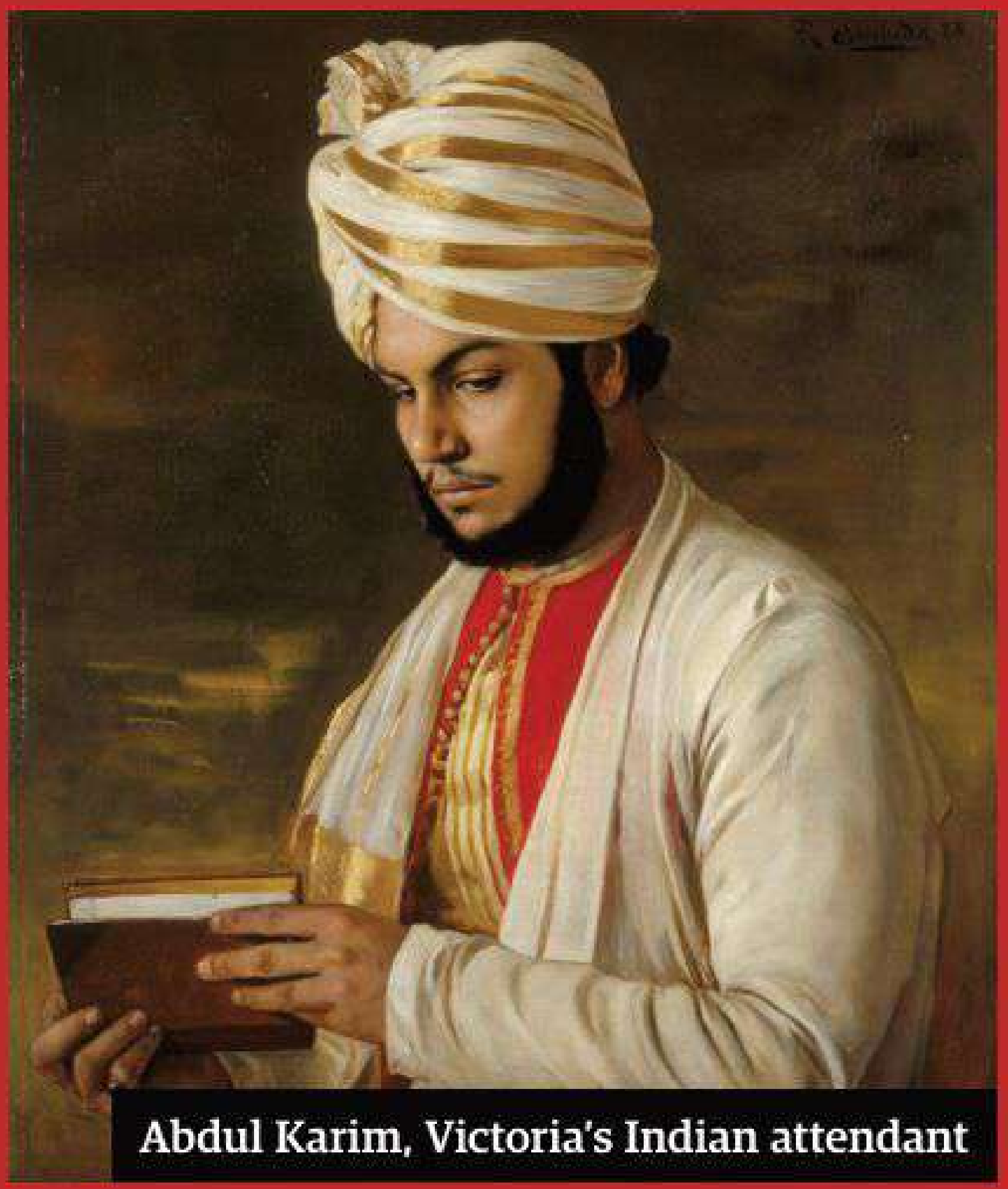
Under Victoria, the economic and de facto political control that Britain had imposed on India under Elizabeth I through the East India Company came under threat. In 1857, Indian soldiers began to revolt, perturbed by the continued imposition of British values at the expense of their own local customs and frustrated that they were not receiving any of the social or economic benefits of empire.

Rumours had begun to circulate that newly introduced rifles required Indian soldiers to bite into the cartridges, allegedly greased with animal fat from sacred animals, abhorrent to both Muslims and Hindus. The Indian soldiers marched on Delhi with the support of the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II and revolt soon spread across the Ganges to Agra, Cawnpore and Lucknow.

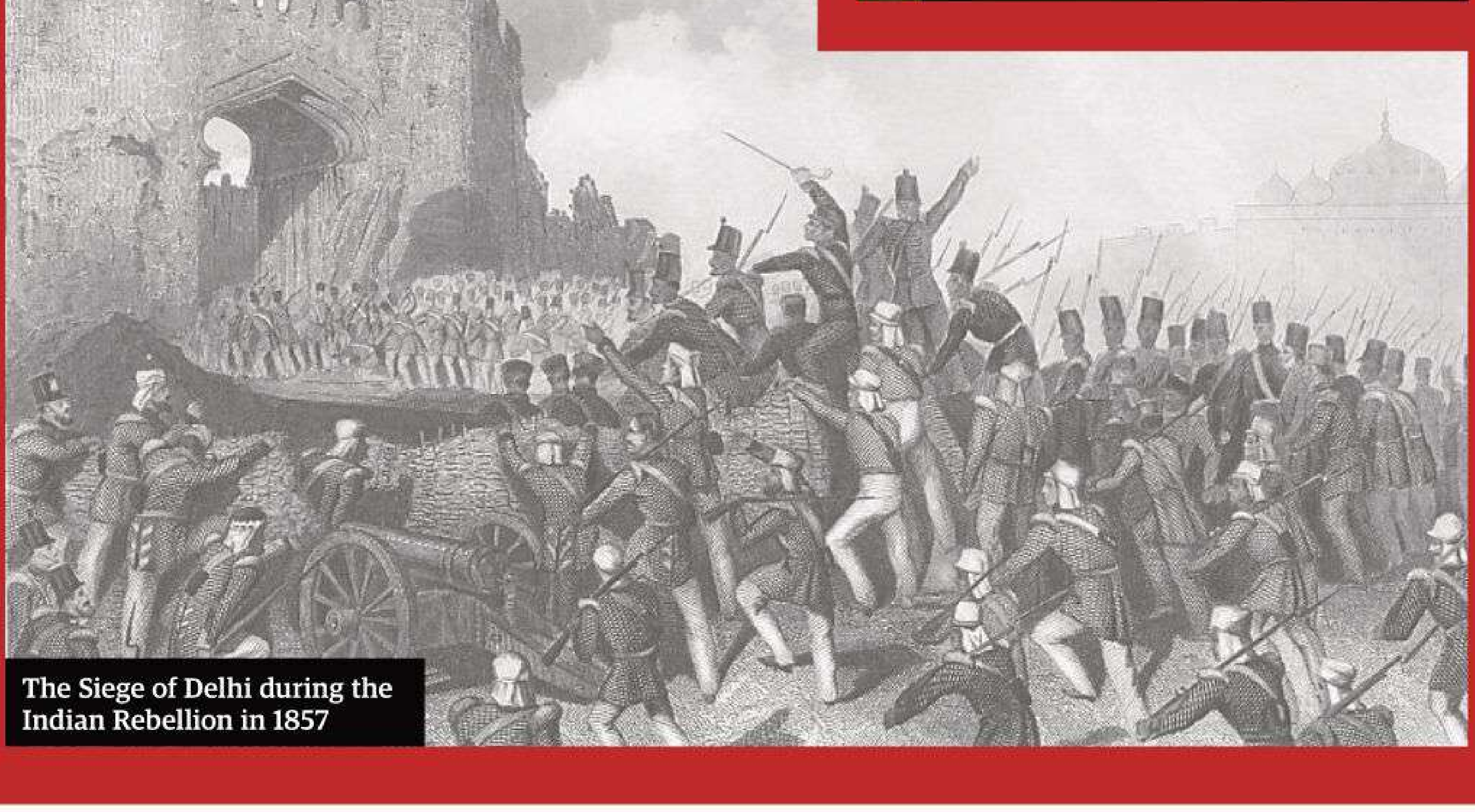
Most historians generally agree that the British slaughtered 100,000 soldiers but the Indian historian Amaresh Misra argues that the death toll could be as high as 10 million if the number of civilians killed in the ten years following the revolt, as the British attempted to reassert their control, are taken into account.

In the aftermath of the munity, India was formally incorporated into the ever-expanding British Empire as a colony and Queen Victoria was made empress of India in 1876. She took a great interest in the newest country to be welcomed into the fold and, with the encouragement of her Indian servant and confidante Abdul Karim, she even learned to write in Hindustani.





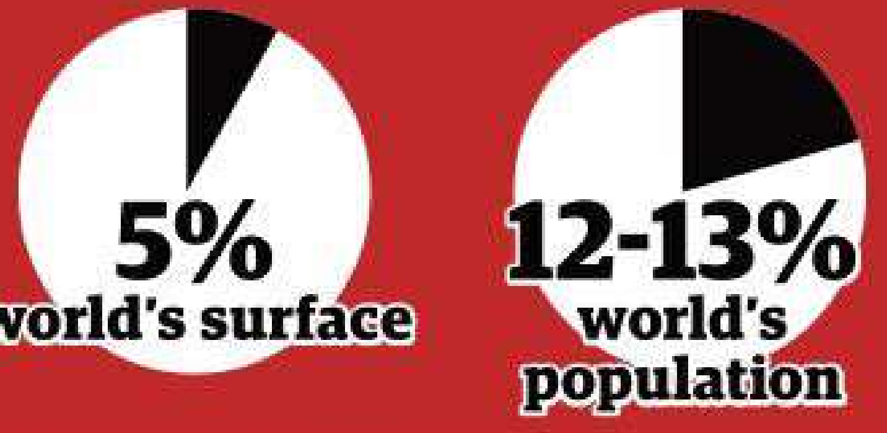
Abdul Karim, Victoria's Indian attendant



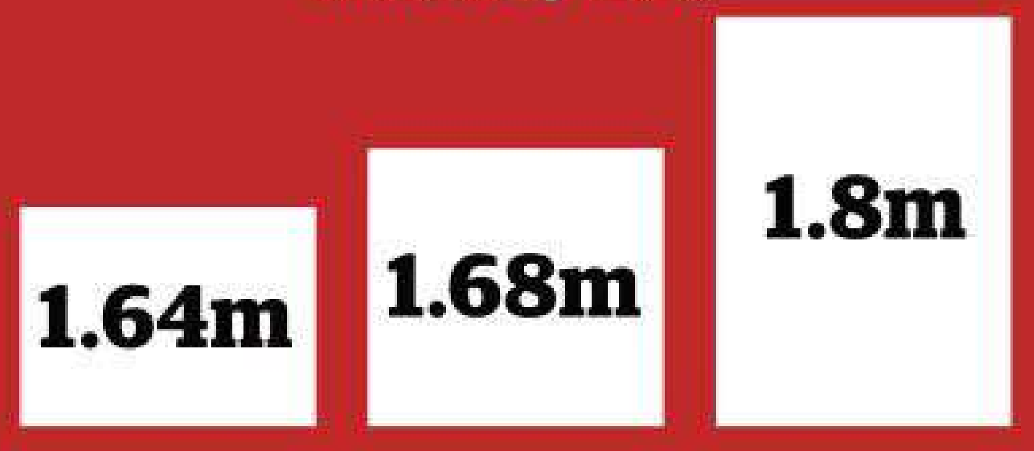
The Siege of Delhi during the Indian Rebellion in 1857

STATS

By the end of Victoria's reign, the British Empire comprised one quarter of the world's surface area and population



In the late Victorian period, many British people emigrated for a new life in the colonies. Emigration rose from 1.64 million in 1880 to 1.68 million by 1900 and 1.8 million by 1920



By 1901, Britain's population was around 37 million and united by one main language but India had a population of 284 million, 179 languages and 544 regional dialects

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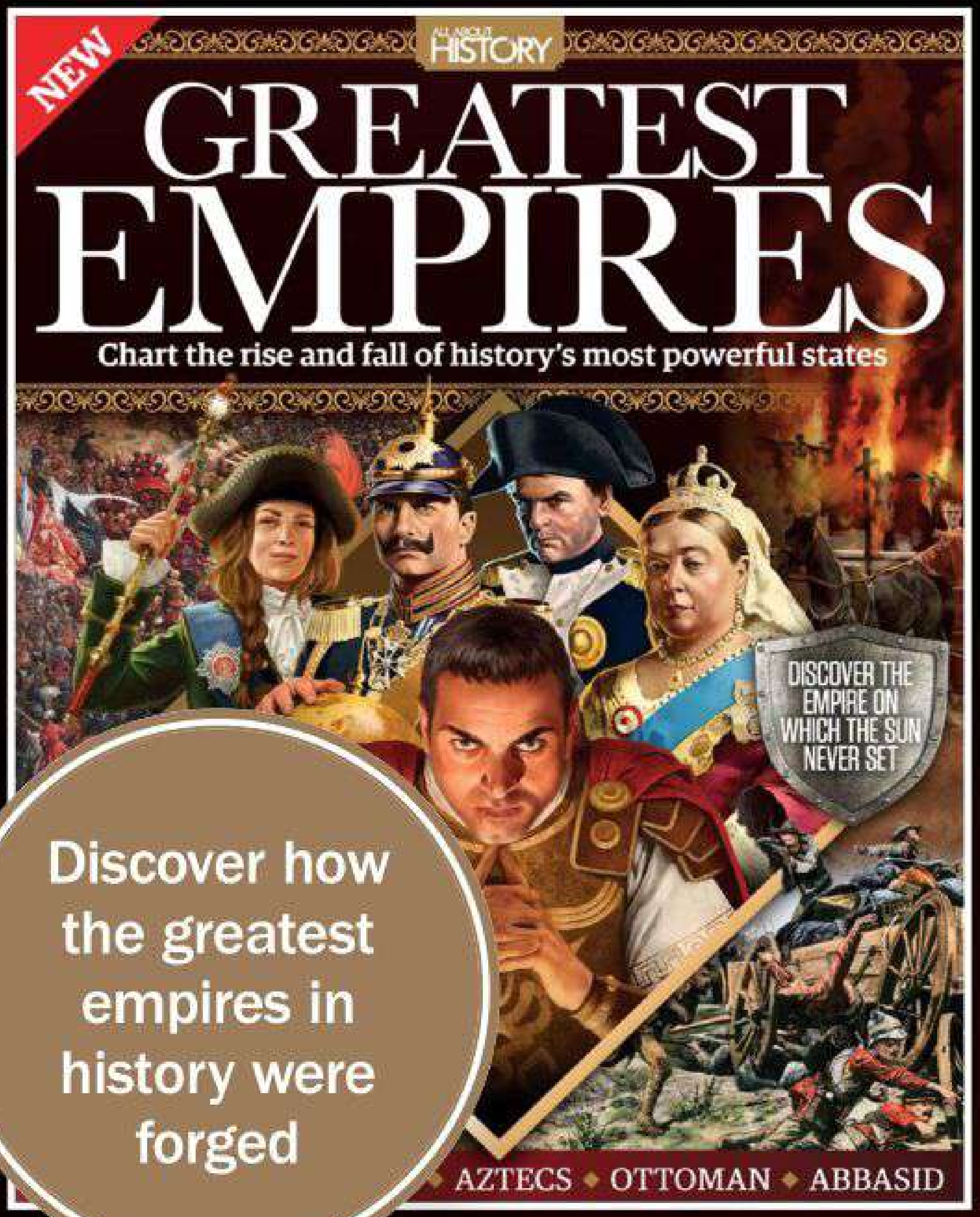
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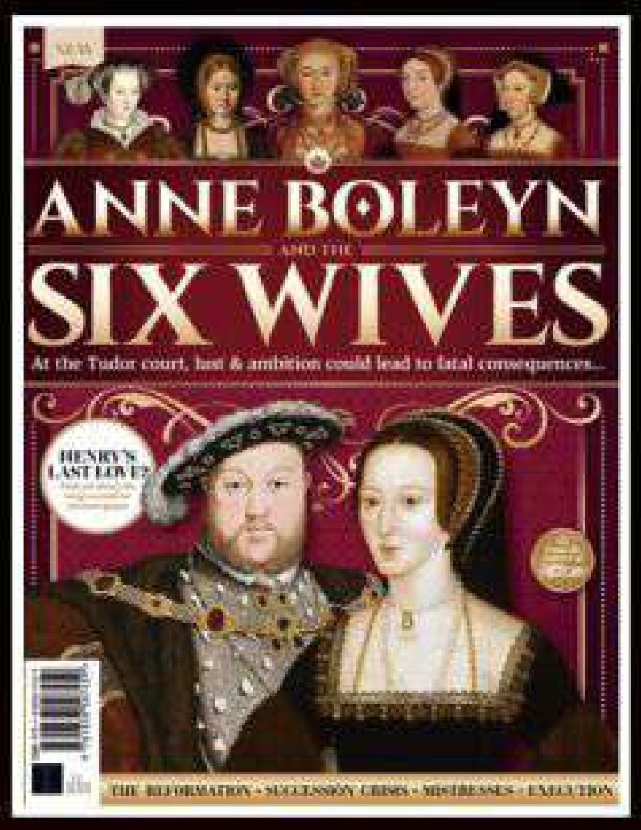
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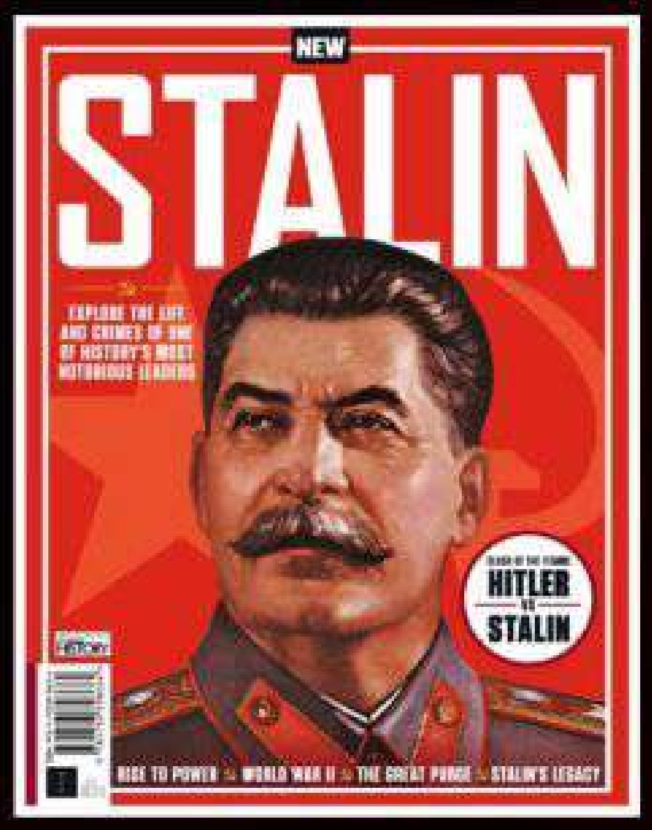
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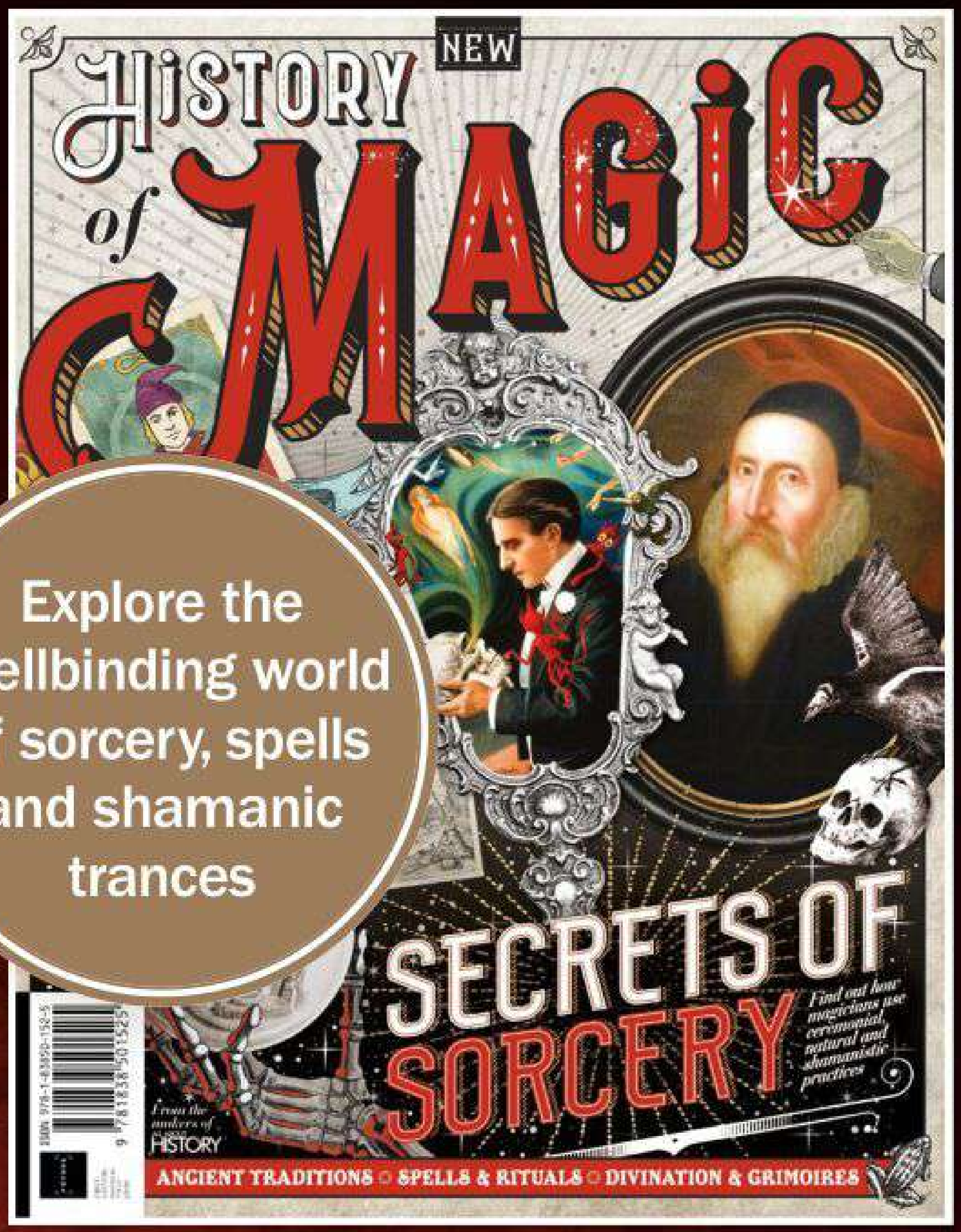
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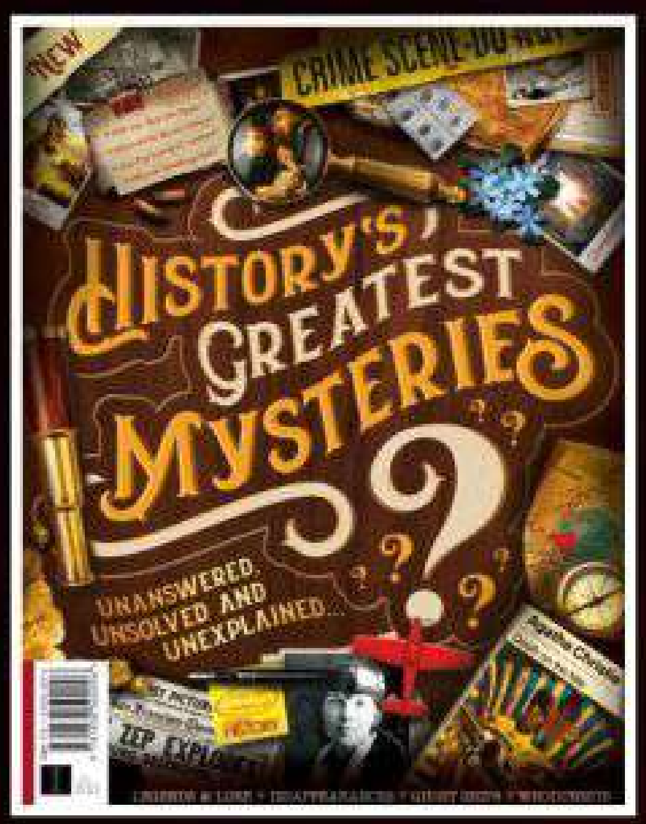
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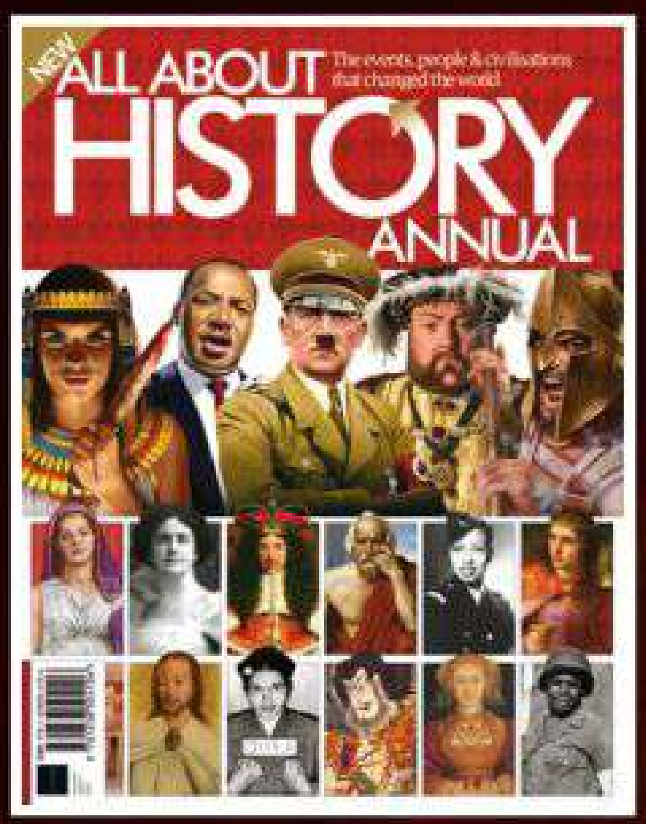
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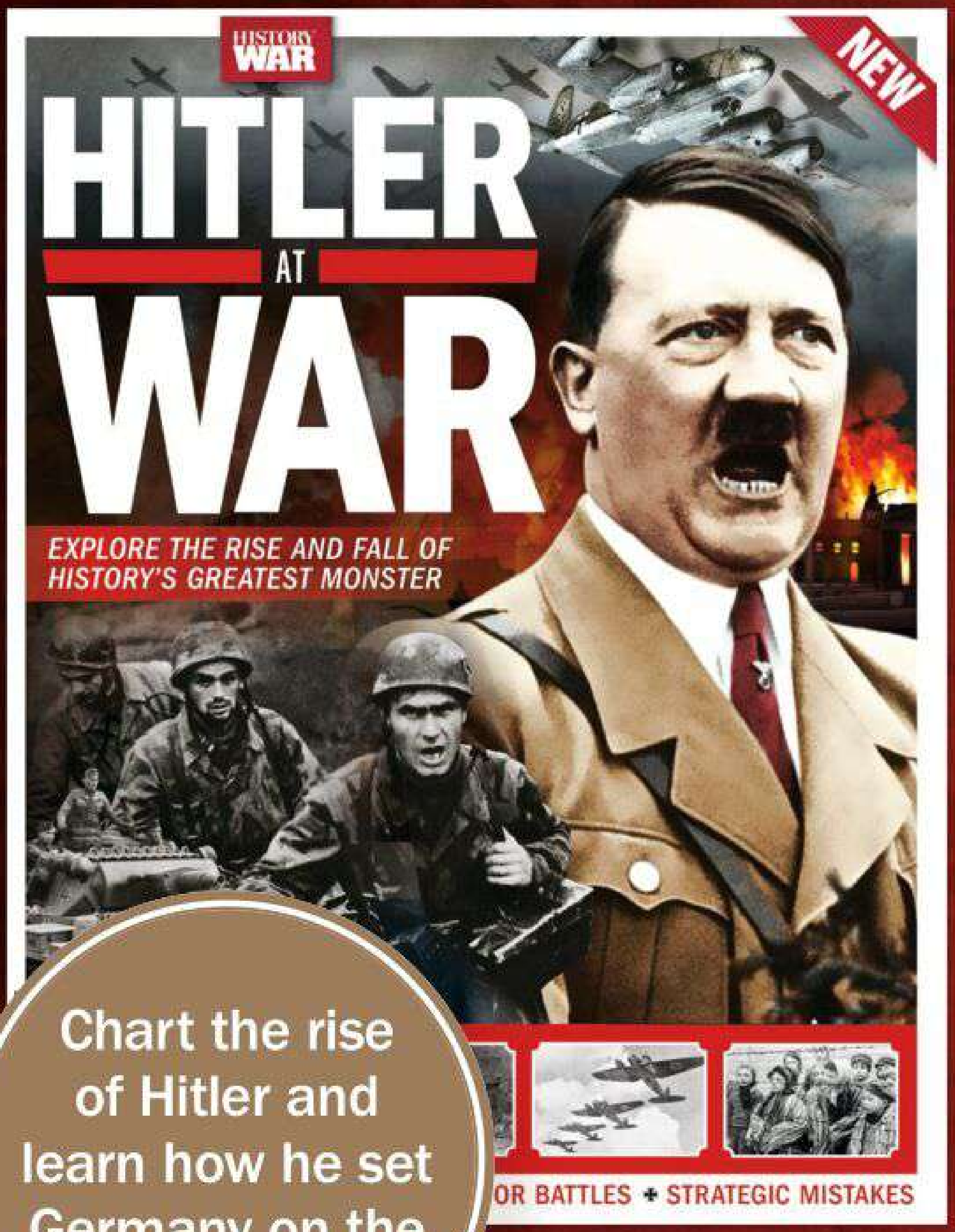
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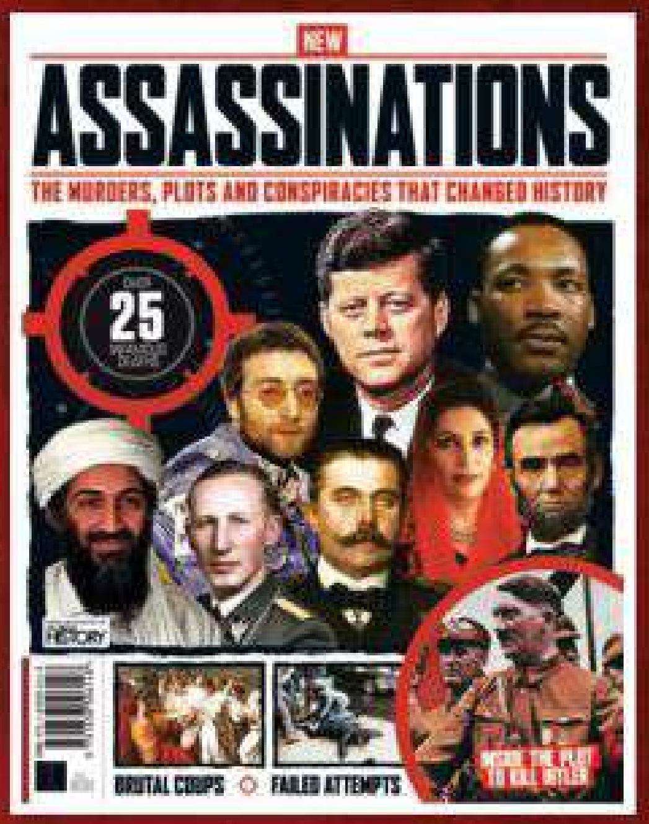
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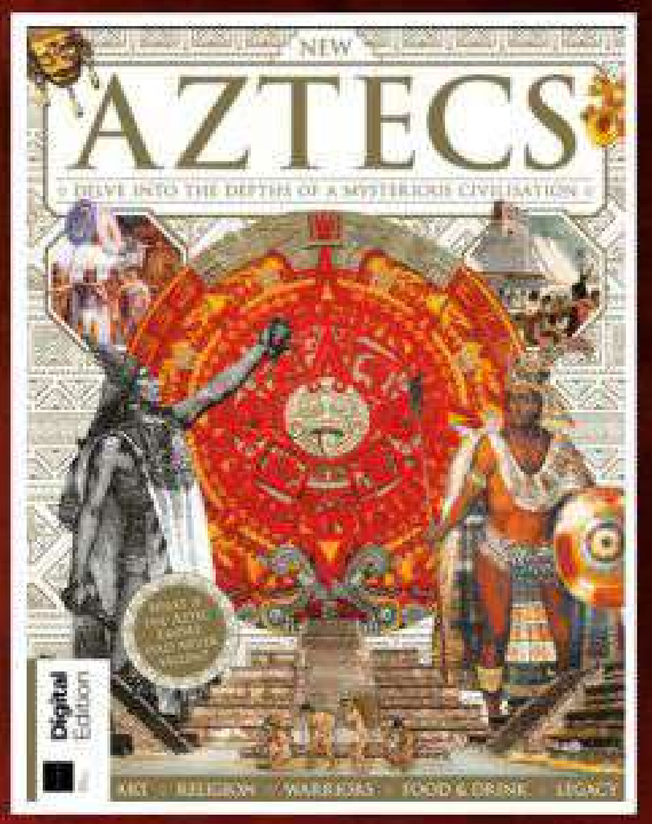
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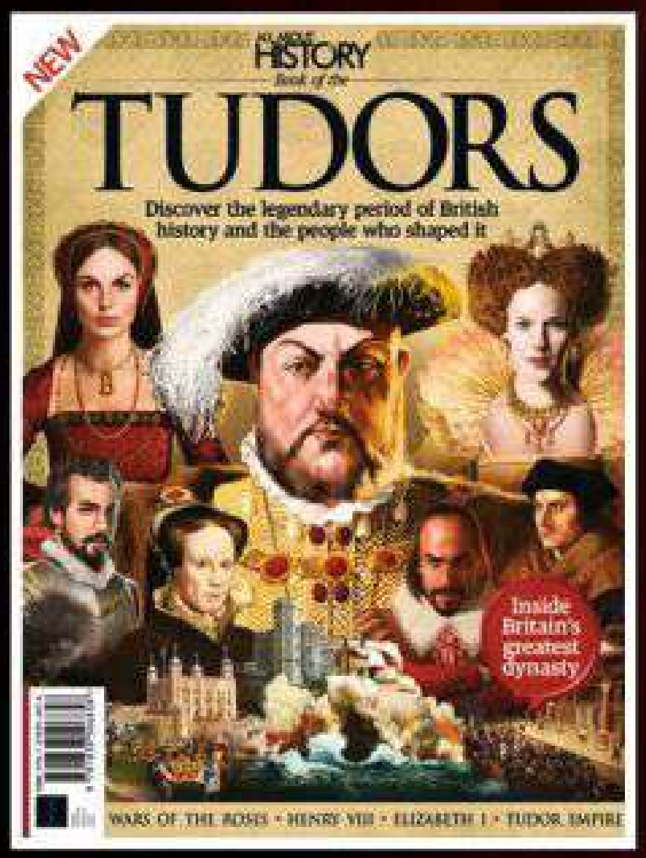
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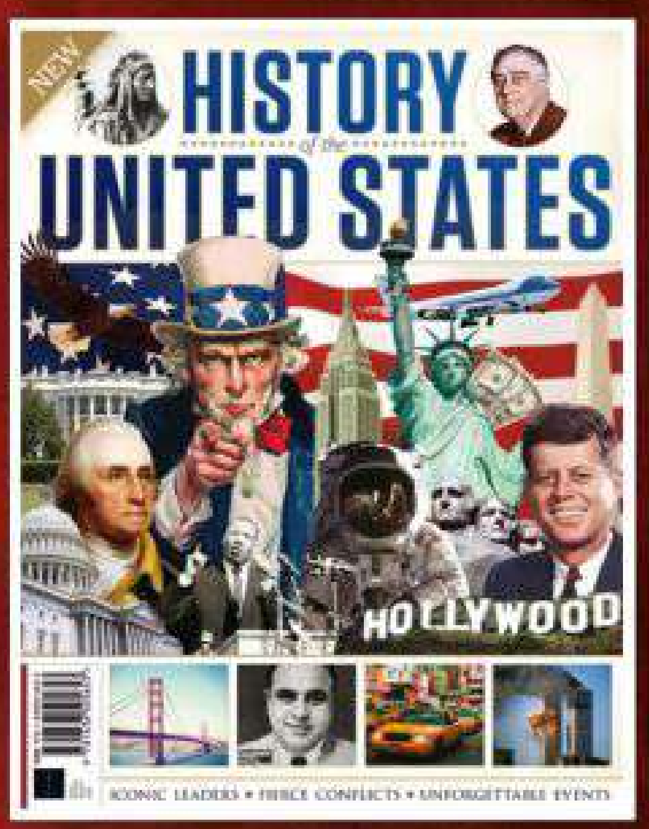
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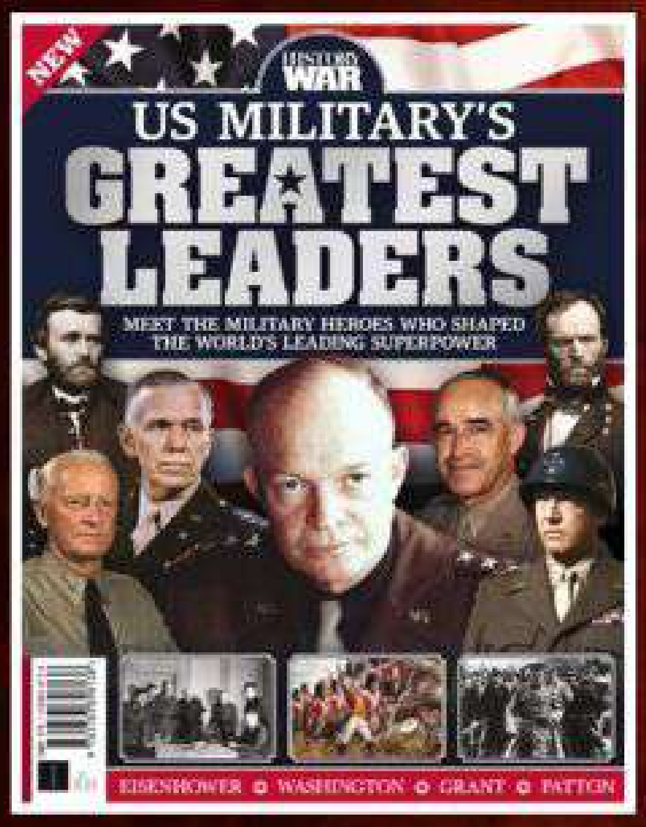
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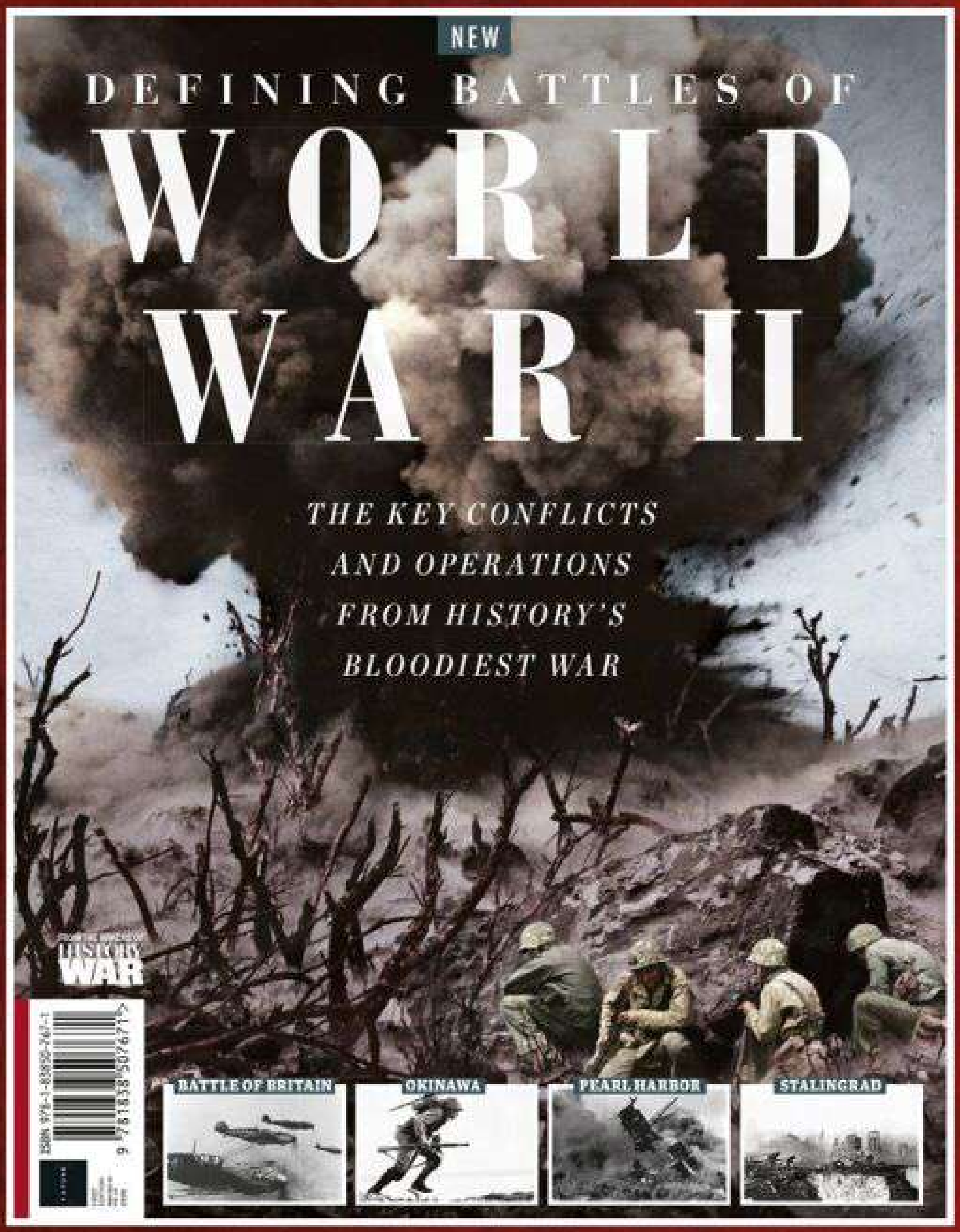
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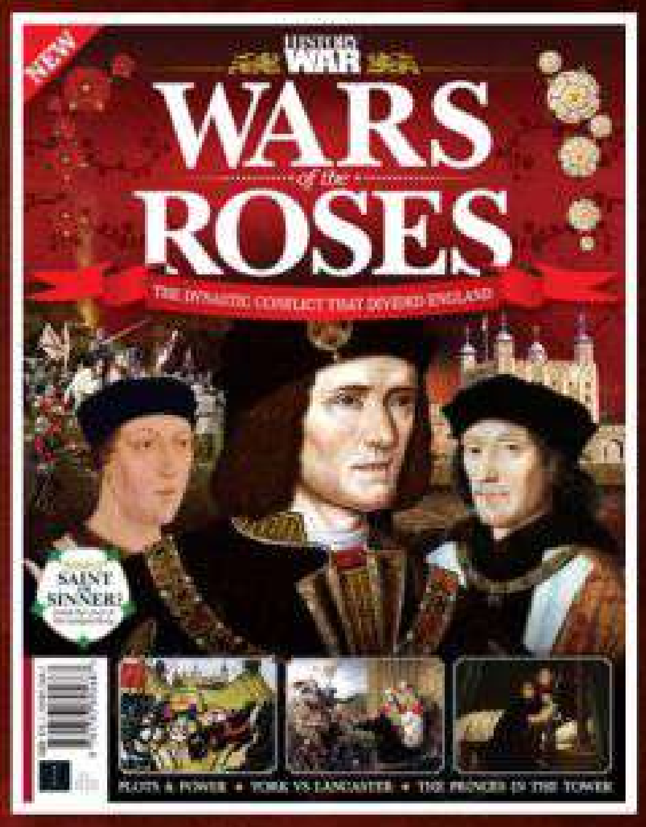
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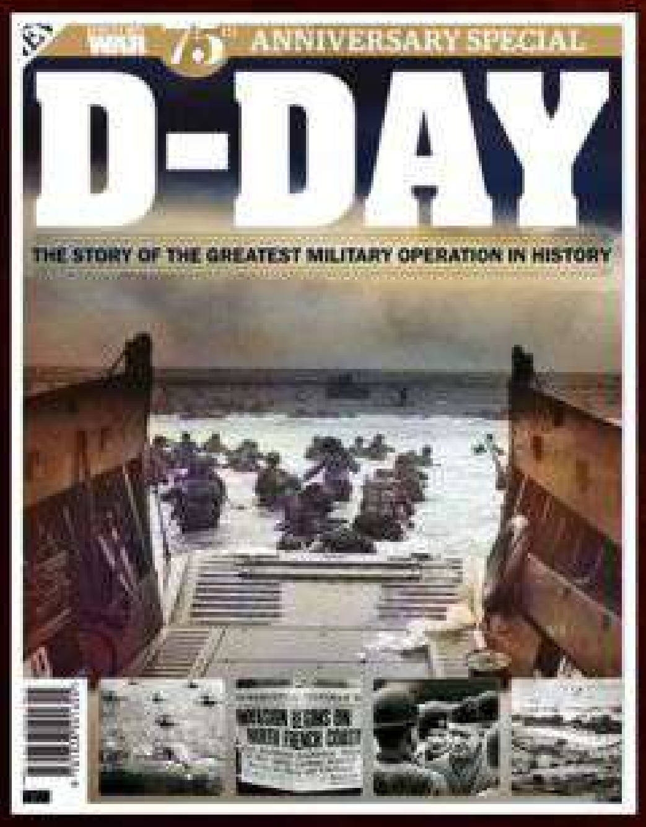
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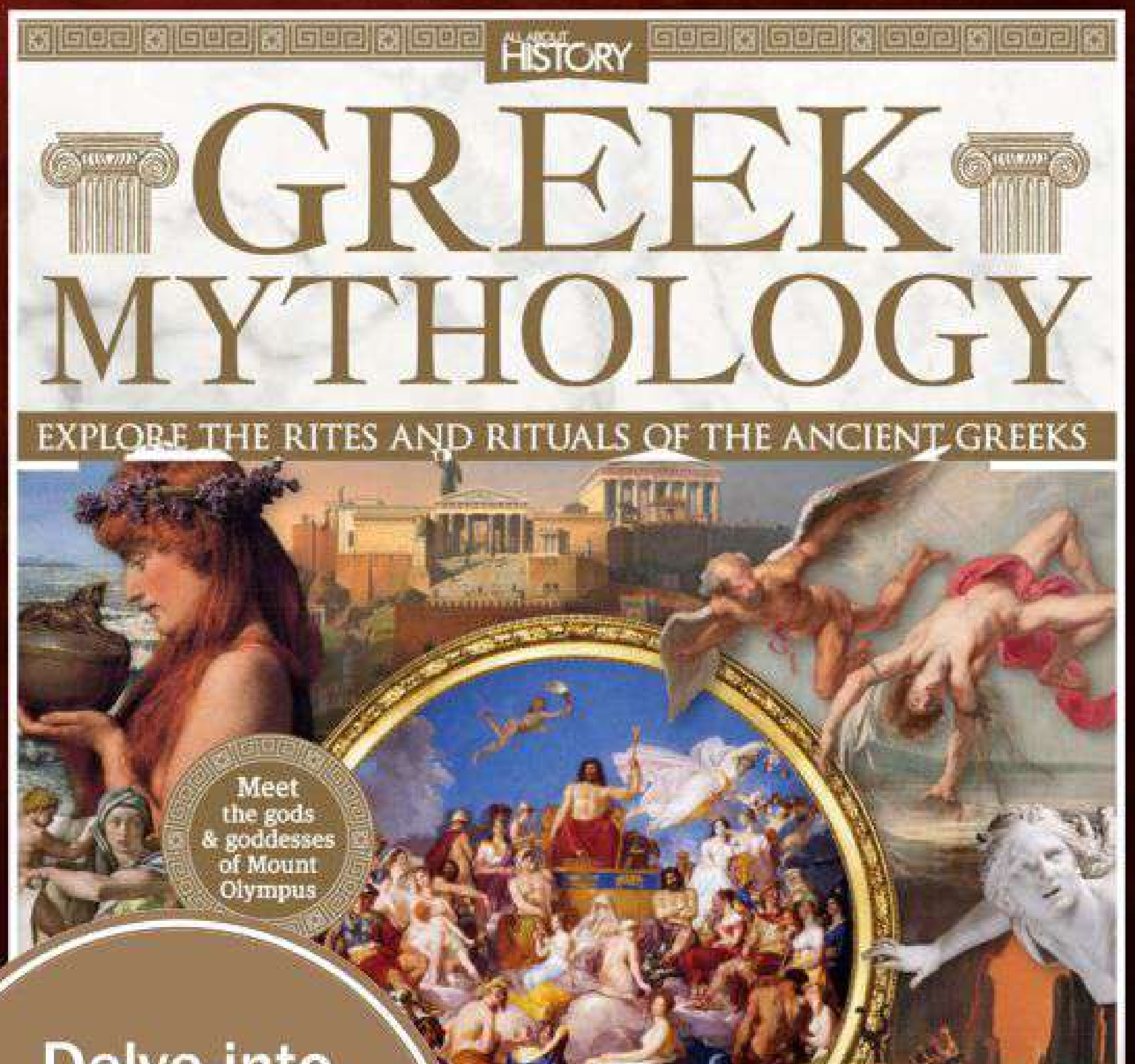
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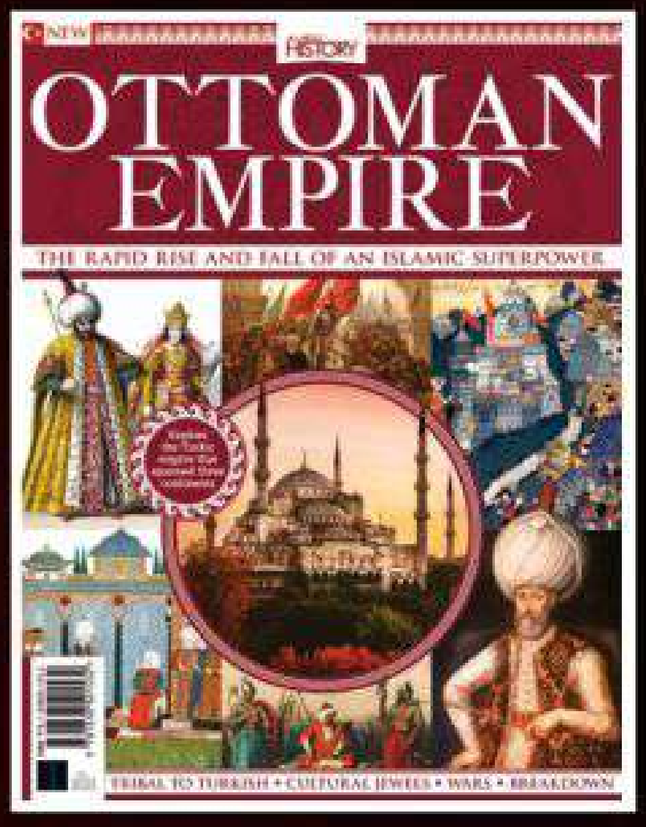
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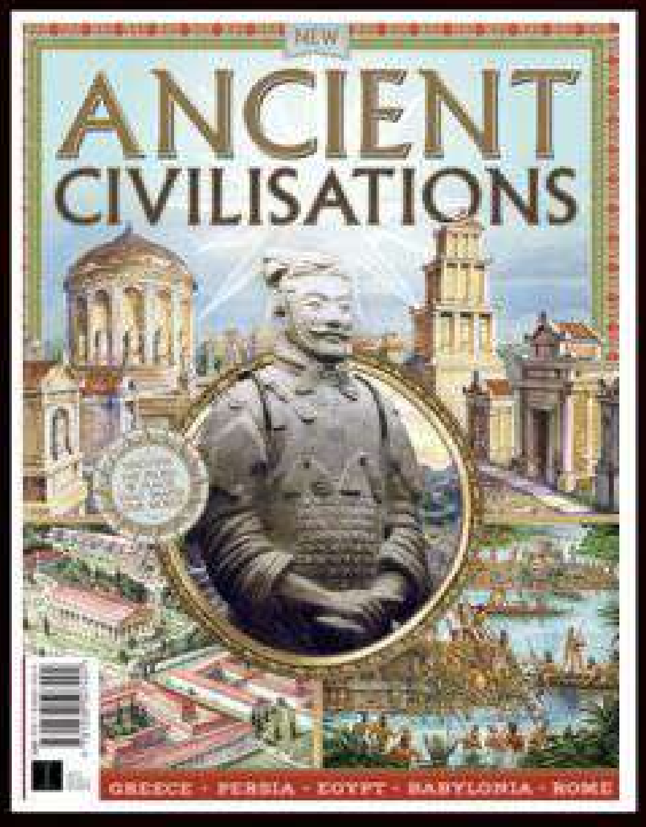
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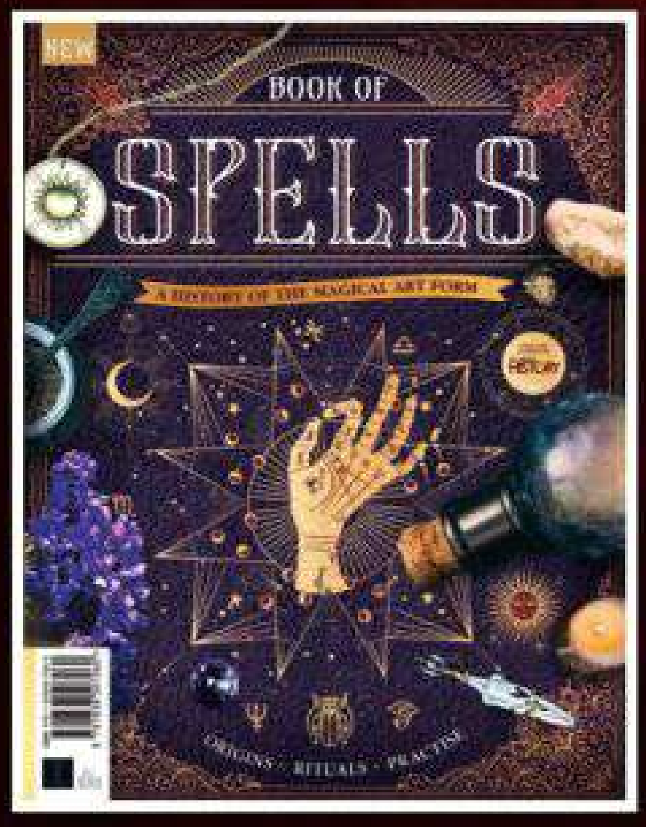
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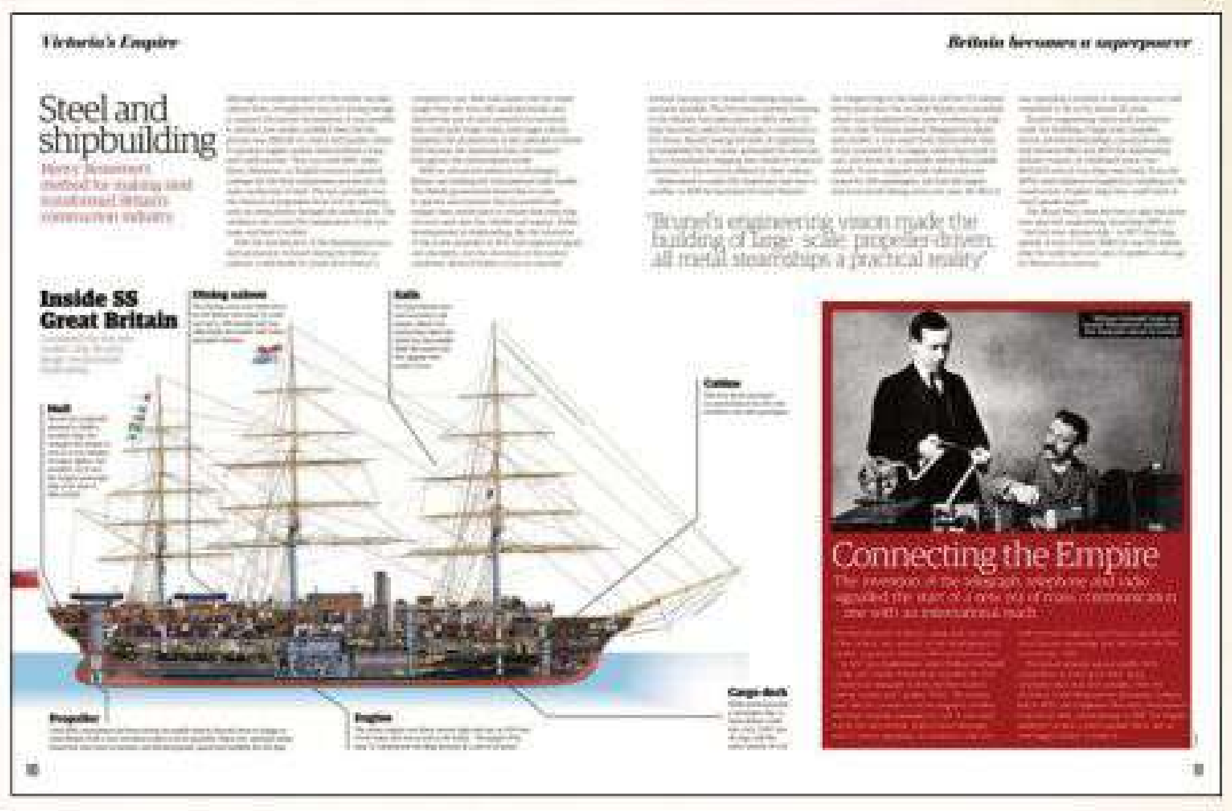

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